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WASHINGTON  
HISTORICAL BUTTONS



G. WASHINGTON

*President of the United States*

Published by I. Reid New York 1796.

*Engraved by William Rollinson*

*In Possession of the Charles Rollinson Estate*

# WASHINGTON HISTORICAL BUTTONS

*Washington Inaugural Buttons  
and Other Buttons  
Bearing the Portrait of Washington  
or Alluding to Him  
and His Administration*

By ALPHAEUS H. ALBERT

WITH FOREWORD BY EDWARD H. DAVIS

Hightstown, New Jersey, 1949



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THIS MONOGRAPH IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED TO

*OSCAR THEODORE BARCK*

WHOSE COUNSEL AND HELPFULNESS MADE THIS WORK POSSIBLE.

MR. BARCK IS A SPECIALIST IN RESEARCH  
OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND A RECOGNIZED COLLECTOR  
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AND AN AUTHORITY ON AMERICAN HISTORICAL BUTTONS



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To my wife, LILLIAN SMITH ALBERT, who has given so freely of her time and knowledge.

## FOREWORD

Not only Button Collectors will find interest in a study of the buttons of the Washington Inauguration and Presidency. "Period" has become an adjective applied to a variety of objects of artistic craft. Louis Quatorze furniture, Directoire gowns, Georgian houses, and Victorian literature, with many other such expressions, are employed to indicate a certain cultural attainment of the times to which they refer: and in none of these is there found a more pertinent index of the taste of their periods than is afforded by the ornamental buttons worn in significant eras. To study the buttons associated with Washington's post-military career is, in fact, to revive the spirit and temper of the infant days of our Republic.

To the uninitiated, such a study may appear so simple as to be obvious at a glance. Let one who may think so make even the first approaches to a justification of the claim and speedy disillusionment will follow, only to be succeeded by an illumination which will open up a new and unexpected vista of early America and, incidentally, reveal one of the charms which have made delightful the explorations of the button collector.

The author of this present study has been known for long to collectors as an investigator whose persistence seems to win rewards beyond ordinary good fortune. He has yielded richly significant contributions to the button world. In none of them, however, has he displayed a research more extensive and exacting, or offered in his results a greater wealth of careful and balanced conclusions.

This would be true even without the illustrations with which his work is beautified. With them, it comes to us as a treasury, rare and comprehensive, for the eye as well as the mind.

President George Washington gave no little thought to his buttons, and this brought pride to the designers and artificers of them. How mightily would that pride be increased, could they know the thought and study and cherished preservation that Washington's countrymen are extending to the surviving buttons today!

*Waterbury, Connecticut*  
*October 15, 1948*

EDWARD H. DAVIS



## P R E F A C E

FOR generations, successive owners have held their Washington Inaugural buttons in high regard because of their historical associations; and a number of these buttons have been accompanied by documents giving pertinent information concerning their history.

Articles on Washington Inaugural buttons have also appeared at various times during the past one hundred and sixty years in numerous historical works, catalogs, newspapers, and periodicals, particularly in the National Button Society publications.

Because the information pertaining to the Washington Inaugural buttons is so widely scattered, a great many requests have come from collectors, libraries, museums and historical societies urging that all of this material be compiled for ready reference. All this material, including much that has heretofore been unpublished, appears in this book.

While collecting this material it was noted that political conditions in 1789-90, in America, England and France, brought about similar celebrations and reactions. Novelties of a similar character were produced, including buttons that bore related legends—with respect to the Rulers of each of these countries. America was the forerunner of such celebrations and the Washington Inaugural buttons undoubtedly predate buttons worn in England to celebrate the recovery of King George III, and those worn in France in honor of Louis XVI.

A study of the original correspondence between George Washington and General Knox was undertaken to ascertain whether any references were made to the buttons worn by Washington at the Inauguration. Two letters were located and are reproduced herein. This fundamental information adds materially to the overall picture regarding the buttons Washington himself wore at the Inauguration.

An effort has been made to include relevant information on all known Washington historical buttons. The writer will welcome the receipt of any pertinent information that will add to our knowledge of these buttons.

Each of the Washington Inaugural patterns has been given a descriptive name suggested by the outstanding characteristics of the device on the button itself.

It is hoped that this presentation will meet the desires of collectors and help to increase the interest in Washington historical buttons.

*October 22, 1948*

ALPHA EUS H. ALBERT





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*Political Conditions in 1789 Reflected in the  
Buttons of the Period*

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FOR more than one hundred and fifty years the Washington Inaugural buttons have been carefully preserved; and during a great part of this period, collectors of Americana not only have been intrigued by them, but have made many conjectures concerning them. No contemporary records are known, however, that give authentic proof either concerning the place of origin, or the names of the makers of these buttons. But the recorded events of the day, accounts in the various State and National newspapers, biographies, correspondence, and historical records, reveal the cause for the origin of these buttons, and their significance.

In 1789, we were starting a new government which marked the beginning of a memorable era. The Constitution had already been ratified, and it had become the law of the land. The first President, Vice-President and the Congress were elected. Every elector had cast one vote for Washington because he was the most beloved and trusted man in America. John Adams, having received the next greatest number of ballots, was elected Vice-President.\*

The fourth of March, 1789, was the day appointed for the organization of the new government, but because traveling was slow and difficult in those days, it was April 6th before a quorum of Congress reached New York, then the capital of the Nation. The first task of Congress was that of counting the electoral votes and dispatching a message post-

\* By the Constitution as it then was, each elector cast two votes without designating which was for President and which for Vice-President. Constitution, art. ii, sec. 1, §3.

## Washington Historical Buttons



WASHINGTON TAKING THE OATH.

*Drawn by H. A. Ogden. Taken from Harper's Bazar, May 11, 1889  
Courtesy of Harper's Bazaar*

## Political Conditions in America in 1789

haste to Mount Vernon to notify George Washington of his election. Immediately upon being notified the President-elect started for New York; his journey thither was a triumphal procession. The people gathered everywhere to venerate the man whose greatness they deeply felt.

It was not until the 30th of April that George Washington took the oath of office as the first President of the United States.

This momentous occasion in our history is well described by John Fiske in *The Critical Period of American History* (1888):

“One week later, on the 30th, came the Inauguration. It was one of those magnificent days of clearest sunshine that sometimes make one feel in April as if summer had come. At noon of that day Washington went from his lodgings, attended by a military escort, to Federal Hall, at the corner of Wall and Nassau streets, where his statue has lately been erected. The city was ablaze with excitement. A sea of upturned faces surrounded the spot, and as the hero appeared, thousands of cocked hats were waved, while ladies fluttered their white handkerchiefs. Washington came forth in a suit of dark brown cloth of American make, with silk hose and shoes decorated with silver buckles, while at his side hung a dress-sword. For a moment all were hushed in deepest silence, while the Secretary of the Senate held forth the Bible upon a velvet cushion, and the Chancellor Livingston administered the oath of office. Then, before Washington had as yet raised his head, Livingston shouted,—and from all the vast company came answering shouts,—‘Long live George Washington, President of the United States!’”

With the revolutionary changes of this memorable era came all kinds of novelties; buttons being among them, as is evidenced by the references in private correspondence and the explanatory notes accompanying the Inaugural buttons displayed in historical collections. Historians and contemporary writers have also made reference to these buttons.

## Washington Historical Buttons

It is amusing to read the following in McMaster's *History of the People of the United States* (1883):

"Since the fall of the Bastille, it was said complainingly, every Republican must dress like a Frenchman, and every Federalist, like a subject of King George. If you happen to oppose the administration, you must go regularly to the shop of M. Sansculotte, before whose door is a flaring liberty-pole, painted tri-color and surmounted with a red cap of liberty, and have your hair cut à la Brutus; your pantaloons must fit tight to the leg or come down to your yellow top-boots, or better yet, your shoes. If you persist in wearing breeches and silk stockings and square-toed boots, then you are an old foggy, or a Federalist, which is the same thing, and must *inscribe your brass buttons*, 'LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT.'" (Italics mine)

In the George Washington National Masonic Memorial in Alexandria, Virginia, among the relics in the Museum is an Inaugural button, with the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT" and the "GW" monogram. It is mounted with this notation:

"This button was fashionable on the occasion of the first inauguration of Gen'l Geo. Washington, President of the United States, A.D., 1789, and was found at the Capitol, Washington City, March 4th, 1825—the day on which John Quincy Adams, Esq. was inaugurated President of the United States."

It is of interest to observe that a man the age of John Quincy Adams, who was twenty-two years old at the time of Washington's Inauguration (his father being then the Vice-President), could remember well the use and occasion to which these buttons were put. The first Inauguration of Washington, therefore, was well within the memory of many persons who had witnessed it thirty-six years earlier.

In 1861, James Ross Snowden, the Director of the Mint in Philadelphia, published a book entitled, *The Medalllic Memorials of Washington*, describing fully those buttons which were in the Mint Collection of the United States. On page 56 of this volume, one may read, "There are also four Washington Buttons in the Cabinet, which were worn at the period of his presidency, namely:

## Political Conditions in America in 1789

"1. Button.—An eagle, with expanded wings, the United States shield upon its breast, an olive branch in the dexter, and three arrows in the sinister talon. Above the eagle's head is the sun, with diverging rays. *Legend.* MEMORABLE ERA MARCH THE FOURTH 1789. Size 21.

"2. Button.—The initials G.W. in an oval compartment; above, in an arch, is the *legend*, LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT. Size 21.

"3. Button.—The initials G.W. surrounded by the *legend*, LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT. Around the edge is a chain, composed of thirteen links, each link containing the initials of a state. Size 21.

"4. Bust of Washington, facing to the left. *Legend.* REMEMBER MARCH FOURTH, 1789. Size 21."

In the museum of Federal Hall, in New York City, located on the spot where, in 1789, Washington took the oath of office, one finds a number of buttons on exhibition. Among this group are two Inaugural buttons, the "GW" with Linked States Border, and the "GW" in Oval Center, each bearing the legend "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT." The inscription on the card reads:

"Buttons worn at the First Inauguration of  
General Washington."

In Independence Hall, in Philadelphia, which city became the National Capital in 1790, several buttons are shown. They include the "GW" with Linked States Border, the "GW" in Oval Center, each bearing the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," and the Eagle with Date bearing the legend "MEMORABLE ERA MARCH THE FOURTH 1789." Accompanying the buttons are these notations:

"This button was manufactured in England, and was thus ornamented to flatter the pride of Americans, assuring large sales and a profitable speculation."

"During the Presidency of Washington, large brass and copper buttons such as these were worn on overcoats."

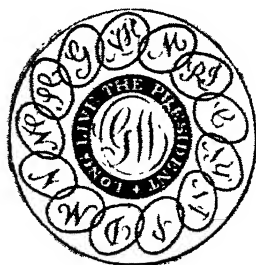


## Washington Historical Buttons

Other specimens may be found in the New York Historical Society; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Washington's Headquarters at Newburgh; the Long Island Historical Society in Brooklyn; The Margaret Reaney Memorial Library, St. Johnsville, New York; The Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts; The Lightner Museum of Hobbies, St. Augustine, Florida; The Museum at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and Washington's home at Mount Vernon. Many additional Washington Inaugural buttons are to be found in private collections throughout the country.\*

Before describing the buttons, and noting how the legends inscribed thereon came into use, let us turn our attention to England and France, and take note of the conditions which existed in each of these countries at this same period.

\* In 1943, the Michigan Button Society started a project for the registration of the Washington Inaugural buttons owned by collectors. The enterprise proved both time-consuming and taxing, and this State Society abandoned the idea in the hope that the National Button Society would carry on the project. So far this plan has not materialized.



## CHAPTER II

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### *Conditions in England in 1789*

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IN LONDON, such periodicals as *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *The Political Magazine*, and *The European Magazine*, for 1789, carried many accounts of the magnificent celebrations that were being held at this time. The various quotations recorded here are taken from these magazines.

King George III, whose life had been despaired of for many months, due to the recurrence of an old malady, had almost miraculously recovered, and for several months daily *Bulletins* were issued by the Court Physicians concerning the King's health. In late February, there appeared this announcement:

"February 26th marks the cessation of the King's illness. He is completely recovered."

Old friends, relatives, and statesmen called upon the Royal Family, and visited and talked with the King. The people of the entire Kingdom longed to show their loyalty in an outward manner.

Under date of Friday March 3: "A Proclamation was issued for a general Thanksgiving throughout England and Wales; and the town of Berwick upon Tweed, for his Majesty's recovery; and a like proclamation for Scotland; *to take place on the 23rd of April*. An order was sent to Ireland for the same purpose."

"*Tuesday March tenth* was the day appointed for the King's message to Parliament and many appropriate celebrations were held. During the day the colors of the various nations were displayed—

## Washington Historical Buttons

France, Spain, Holland, Prussia, Russia, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, and even America—gave their tokens of joy—some ships on the river carried devices on their streamers in large capital letters, either at the bowsprit or masthead, with 'LONG LIVE THE KING.' *All the merchants and inhabitants seemed to vie with each other as to who should give the most beautiful and picturesque devices for the oc-*

*"March 20th.* In consequence of his Majesty's happy recovery, London was illuminated in the most splendid manner—large bonfires blazed, guns were fired, and grand transparent paintings were exhibited. Every demonstration of joy and gratitude was expressed by the inhabitants in general, and that spirit of loyalty, for which Britons are renowned, never appeared more conspicuously, than on this glorious and memorable occasion."

Galas, fetes and celebrations of all kinds took place, and many are worthy of mention. *The European Magazine* carried an account of the *Queen's Drawing Room on March 26th*, "*presenting such a scene as our Court in its brightest period, or any other Court in Europe at any period, never presented to the world.* It was all that was gay and beautiful in the country, paying homage to the best of Queens on the best of all public occasions—the restoration of the health of their Sovereign." The elaborateness of this affair, which began in the early evening and concluded after seven thirty the following morning is indescribable.

*"March 31st.* The Subscription *Gala* held at the Pantheon, was a blaze of illumination with upwards of 14,000 lamps. Nearly 1400 of the nobility, gentry, ambassadors, &c. were present. The entire assembly of men and women were in special dress and all wore the insignia 'LONG LIVE THE KING' in conspicuous manner on their persons. . . ."

*"April 2nd.* The recovery of the King was celebrated at Windsor in splendor and magnificence. The banquet was the most luxurious of any

## Conditions in England 1789

given at Windsor during the present reign. The day should likewise be noticed, as being the first time of his Majesty's appearance in public since his recovery.

"At seven o'clock the *Drawing Room* began. Their Majesties were seated under a canopy. The King was in full dress uniform of blue and gold. The Queen had the most superb bandeau in her headdress, with letters in diamonds of 'LONG LIVE THE KING.' The Princesses had head-dresses nearly the same. . . ."

"*April 15.* In the evening her Majesty, accompanied by the Princesses Augusta and Elizabeth, went to Covent Garden Theatre. On her Majesty's entering the box, the theatre thundered applause; her Majesty sensibly felt the congratulations. When seated, the ordinary curtain was drawn up, and displayed a splendid drop-cloth with his Majesty's ARMS superbly emblazoned, having a scroll over it, with the words 'LONG LIVE THE KING'. . . ."

"*April 20.* A City Assembly Gala was held in Merchant Taylors Hall on April 20th, and claims a rank in point of elegance with any fete already given. It was a testimony of loyal affection for the recovery of the King, with determination that splendor should not be checked by apprehension of expense.

"The room was hung with white calico, so exquisitely calendered as to give to the eye the gloss of satin; this was ornamented with a gold fringe, which, with festoons of flowers, gave the whole a fine richness of appearance. The ribbons that tied up the festoons bore the words, 'LONG LIVE THE KING'."

"*April 23.* This day being appointed by royal proclamation to be observed as a day of General Thanksgiving, his Majesty was pleased for the greater solemnity, to go in public to the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, accompanied by the Queen, the Royal Family, both Houses of Parliament, the great Officers of State, and the whole Corporation of London, to return thanks to God for his great mercies and blessing.

## Washington Historical Buttons

The universal joy and loyalty which pervaded the Cities of London and Westminster; the grandeur of the spectacle exhibited; the religious entry of our beloved Sovereign, fill the mind with such awful ideas, as scarcely leave it room to enter into the minutiae of grandeur.

"Scaffoldings were erected on each side of the awning, under which their Majesties and the Royal Family entered the church; innumerable others were erected against the churches and houses the whole way from Pall-Mall to St. Paul's; many were decorated with carpets and ingenious devices. They were filled with rejoicing spectators, many of whom remained in their places all night . . . the ladies all wore bandeaux with 'LONG LIVE THE KING' upon them. The procession began at eight, and the whole was finished about three o'clock.

*"There never was known such a number of people congregated in London on any former occasion.* All stages, coaches, and horses, had been engaged for a week past a hundred miles around the metropolis. The influx of foreigners was also prodigious.

"Throughout the entire procession the two legends 'GOD SAVE THE KING' and 'LONG LIVE THE KING' were most prominently displayed. The colorful uniforms were further enhanced with ribbons, rosettes, cockades, sword knots, arm bands, sashes, hat-bands, &c., all bearing the inscription 'LONG LIVE THE KING'. The fifteen members of the Ancient Society of Archers were dressed in green uniforms, with their bows in their hands, and elegant belts to their quivers; on which were embroidered 'LONG LIVE THE KING'."

"*April 25.* The public demonstrations of joy and loyalty by the inhabitants of London and Westminster, on the occasion of his Majesty's appearance at St. Paul's, exceeded all expression; the illuminations surpassed in splendor and magnificence all former occasions.

"The illuminations this evening were not so general as on the 23rd, but in particular instances, they were infinitely more superb. We may safely affirm, that the art and means of illuminating houses never were

## Conditions in England 1789

so complete as on this day. From the improved form of the lamps and other circumstances, *there never were in England more superb illuminations, than on the 23rd and this evening*. More time was given to prepare for the spectacle of this night and the devices and paintings &c were more curious and rich. Almost all the public houses, the great offices of the Government, the Companies, the palaces, and even some of the churches were illuminated. Every lane and alley in the Metropolis exhibited tokens of joy for the Sovereign's recovery. To speak of private efforts, which, though tasteful were lost in the superior blaze of public magnificence, would be endless. The total expense was not less than perhaps a half a million."

The elaborate illuminations are described in minute detail in all of these English periodicals. They appeared in all parts of the Kingdom and consisted of variegated lamps hung in festoons, that spelled out appropriate designs, as the initials "G.R.," the Crown, and the King's Arms (the rose, thistle and shamrock). The illuminated motto, "LONG LIVE THE KING," constituted the background of the majority of the designs.

The editor of one magazine stated: "The limits of our Magazine will not permit us to publish all that has been sent from all parts of the Kingdom; we can hardly enumerate the various places which have been most zealous, to express their general joy. No event *in the annals of this country has occasioned such universal exultation*, nor did the Father of a people experience such pleasing and convincing proofs of his subjects attachment and affection. Indeed the records of this Kingdom furnish *no precedent* of the like universal expression and gladness *in any degree to the present*."

Magnificent costumes were popular and both men and women wore medallion likenesses of his Majesty, some plain, some in pearl, and some set in diamonds, and the inscription, "LONG LIVE THE KING" was everywhere to be seen on badges, jewelry and accessories. So it is only natural that buttons were included in these items made to commemorate and honor such an important occasion.

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The button shown below bears the *King's Arms*, (*the rose, thistle and shamrock*), with the *crown* above and the legend "LONG LIVE THE KING" on the scroll. It is of Sheffield silver in excellent condition and gives every evidence of fine quality and workmanship.



## CHAPTER III

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### *Conditions in France in 1789-1790*

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WITH the reign of Louis XVI in France, there began the period of atonement of the French Monarchy and Aristocracy, that had culminated in the preceding reign. The Revolution followed in 1789.

After the fall of the Bastille, July 14, 1789, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were imprisoned in the Tuileries. The die-hards mocked the King's spinelessness and condemned his complaisance. Even if Louis had been inclined to fight the Revolution, he had no means to do it. There was no money in the treasury to finance a counter-revolution, and the army was no longer loyal to him. The people demanded certain rights and they seemed to be getting them. They were on the march.

The King felt it safest to go along with the Revolution and work with the people, despite the actions and feelings of the Queen. On February 4, 1790, he appeared before the Assembly to offer his cooperation, and in a most extraordinary speech he declared himself the leader of the Revolution. This startling announcement rocked not only France but all Europe, and the remaining part of that winter and spring Louis was the hero of the nation. Medals were struck in his honor, and monuments and statues erected which bore the inscription, "Restorer of French Liberty." Paris struck a patriotic medal showing the head of Louis XVI surmounted by the legend, "LONG LIVE FOR EVER THE BEST OF KINGS." Underneath was this tribute—"Restorer of French Liberty and the true friend of his People."



## Washington Historical Buttons

During the spring and early summer, Louis mingled with the people riding without a retinue, and everywhere were cries of "*Vive le Roi*" (LONG LIVE THE KING). The first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille was celebrated in Paris, July 14, 1790, with much fervor, and Louis was cheered by all as the symbol of national unity and the restorer of liberty. He delighted the populace who came from all parts of France for this glorious celebration, when he addressed the National Guardsmen who congregated on the Champs de Mars.

Historians record the unforgettable demonstration of the intense patriotism which took place when Louis rose to take the Civic Oath, and the cries of *Vive!* which burst from hundreds of thousands of throats. The people sang the lilting song-hit of the Revolution, *Ça ira*, *ça ira* (a free translation, It will be all right).

On this particular occasion the Royal Family sat on a raised pavilion and looked down upon the vast amphitheatre of humanity spreading before them. Behind the King's seat was a huge banner with the words "THE NATION, THE LAW, THE KING."



During this period, abounding with these conflicting sentiments, slogans appeared on patriotic buttons, singularly uniting such phrases as, the Nation, the Law, the King and Liberty.

The button\* illustrated here is very similar to the English button in that it shows a *crown* and a *scroll* with a similar legend, "*Vive le Roi & la Nation*" (LONG LIVE THE KING AND THE NATION). These emblems together with the *Liberty Cap on a Pole* complete the device.

\* In Louis Fallou's book, *Le Bouton uniforme français*, this button is designated as a patriotic button, and ascribed to the year 1790.

## Conditions in France 1789-1790

Thus it is seen, that in three countries, America, England and France, patriotic buttons with similar legends were worn during the same period.



Since several of our Washington buttons bear the date of March Fourth 1789, it seems to establish the fact that the American button predates the patriotic buttons used both in England and France to celebrate the important events then taking place in those countries.



THE FIRST INAUGURATION BALL

*Washington leading Mrs. Maxwell in the Minuet.*

*Drawn by H. A. Ogden. Taken from Harper's Bazar, May 11, 1889*

*Courtesy of Harper's Bazaar*

## CHAPTER IV

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### *The Legends Come into Use*

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#### THE DATED BUTTONS



Two of the Washington buttons are inscribed with the appointed date for the organization of the new government and the Inauguration of our first president, George Washington. They are inscribed thus:

- (a) "REMEMBER MARCH FOURTH 1789" with the profile portrait of Washington
- (b) "MEMORABLE ERA MARCH THE FOURTH 1789" with the displayed eagle

THE MEMORABLE ERA. The terms "New Era" and "Memorable Era" were mentioned a great deal in the prose and poetry from 1789 on. Innumerable examples could be cited besides the motto "NEW ERA," which was the keynote of the Grand Federal Parade, held on July 4, 1788, in Philadelphia.

## Washington Historical Buttons

### THE "GW" MONOGRAM, AND THE LEGEND, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT"

THE "GW" MONOGRAM. Many of the Washington Inaugural buttons display the monogram of George Washington in addition to the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT."

Most of the engraving of the colonial period was copied from *Boxxles' New and Complete Book of Cyphers*: designed and engraved on twenty-four copper plates, by John Lockington. This work was published in London in 1777, and is a fascinating reference. Annexed here is a photostatic copy of an engraving of the two watch-seals which were worn together by Washington in early life. Upon each is engraved his monogram, the second one being the facsimile of his written initials. This monogram bears a close resemblance to the one used within the encircling legend on several of the Inaugural buttons.



*Washington's Watch-Seals*

An account in the *Massachusetts Centinel* for 1789, makes mention that, "the women not to be outdone by the men agreed to adopt an article of attire to be worn as a testimonial to the illustrious President. They invented a sash, a broad white ribbon, with 'gw' in gold letters or spangles, encircled with a *laurel wreath* in front—on one end of the sash to be painted the *American Eagle*, and on the other a *Fleur-de-llys*." (Italics mine)

In the late autumn of 1789, the President made a "good will" tour of the New England States, and this same Massachusetts newspaper carried an advertisement for many days to the effect that: "A few elegant Washington Sashes and Ribbons are taken in. Printed and Gilt in the neatest manner." Another interesting item of note was recorded: "At the Oratorio on Tuesday, the Marchioness Traversay exhibited on the bandeau of her hat the 'GW' and the *Eagle*, set in brilliants on a velvet ground." (Italics mine)

## The Legends Come Into Use

THE LEGEND, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT." Contemporary newspapers in 1789 record the great celebrations and elaborate parades held in New York City, at the time of Washington's Inauguration, and later, when he visited the various States of the Union. Large illuminated transparencies of the President were placed in several of the most important cities, and the legends "LONG, LONG LIVE GEORGE WASHINGTON," and "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," in large bold letters, were much in evidence everywhere.

When Washington made a similar "good will" tour of the Southern States in 1791, it is recorded in Griswold's *Republican Court*, under the date of May 2, that:

"The Southern women wore sashes with the portrait of Washington, also fillets, and bandeaux of white ribbons, with the inscription, 'LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT'."

"At Perrysburg, Washington was met by a committee from Savannah, and conducted on board a richly decorated boat, in which the party were rowed down the river by nine Sea Captains, dressed in light blue silk jackets, black satin breeches, with white silk stockings, and round hats with black ribbons, inscribed with 'LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT' in golden letters."

That this custom prevailed over a period of years is shown by the following quotation taken from the *Memoirs of Washington*, penned by George Washington Parke Custis:

"The birth-night ball was instituted at the close of the revolutionary war, and its first celebration, we believe was held in Alexandria. Celebrations of the birth-night soon became general in all the towns and cities, the twenty-second of February like the fourth of July, being considered a national festival. . . . In the larger cities, where public halls were customary, the birth-night, in the olden time, as now, was the gala assembly of the season. It was attended by all the beauty and fashion, and at the seat of government, by the foreign ambassadors and by strangers of distinction. The first president always attended on the birth-night. Among the brilliant illustrations of a birth-night of five and twenty years ago, the most unique and imposing was the groups of young and beautiful ladies, wearing in their hair bandeaux or scrolls, having embroidered thereon, in language both ancient and modern, the motto of 'LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT'."

# Washington Historical Buttons

## THE LAUREL WREATH

THE LAUREL WREATH. The Washington Pieces (Cents) of 1783, show on the obverse a portrait of Washington, and on the reverse an *open laurel wreath* very similar to the one appearing on the two buttons of the Laurel Wreath Series. These Washington coins were in constant use for six years prior to our first President's Inauguration. Although no definite proof has been found linking these buttons with any particular administration, it is known that the laurel wreath, and the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," were closely associated with Washington. Mention has been made that the laurel wreath motif was painted on women's dress sashes worn at the various Washington Celebrations in 1789. These facts lead one to believe that the Laurel Wreath buttons were worn during the 1789-1793 period.

## THE FIFTEEN STAR PATTERN

THE FIFTEEN STAR PATTERN. This unique brass button came to light on the West Coast in 1947, and to date it is the only specimen reported. The face of the button shows an inner circle of fifteen six-pointed stars, with the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT" encircling.

It is possible that some of these "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT" buttons were not all worn at the first Inauguration, but were manufactured continuously, and sold for the various celebrations occasioned by the good will tours made by Washington to the various parts of the Country, throughout his first Administration. Enthusiasm, according to contemporary records, ran high, and a great variety of novelties appeared, and were worn on these occasions.

The Union numbered fifteen States, before the close of Washington's first Administration in 1793, Vermont and Kentucky having been admitted in 1791 and 1792, respectively.

Thus we see how the words "Long Live George Washington The President of the United States," uttered by Chancellor Livingston at the conclusion of the Inauguration ceremonies, struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the people and were carried throughout the land. Although shortened to "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT" this legend became a part of the ornamentation on numerous articles of clothing and accessories, and other decorative items appearing during this period.

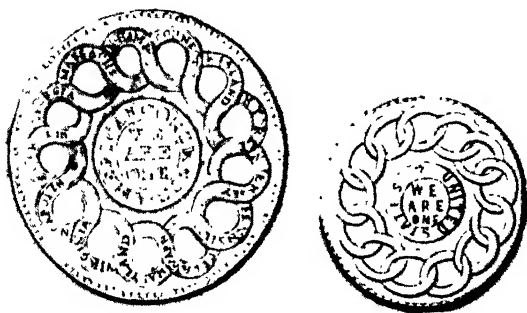
## CHAPTER V

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### *The Linked Colonial Circle*

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*Continental Currency (Dollar and Cent)*

AMONG the Continental Currency used as early as 1776, there is a coin, a dollar, made in three different metals, pewter, brass or silver. The reverse shows a chain of thirteen circular links, having an abbreviation of the names of the thirteen States impressed thereon. The Fugio cents of 1787 bear a like chain without the names of the States. The reverse of each coin is illustrated above.

At the suggestion of Franklin, the linked colonial circle had also been employed on the paper money of the period.

A flag bearing this very same device is displayed in the old City Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

These examples emphasize the fact that the linked colonial circle was in general use for at least thirteen years before Washington's Inauguration. This substantiates the belief that the button bearing this device was worn at the time of the first Inauguration.



## Washington Historical Buttons

In 1783, "the French officers gave to Mrs. Washington a set of painted china\* of delicate color, with the thirteen large and thirteen small elliptical links motif. Within each link is the name of one of the



*Mrs. Washington's China*

original thirteen States. The interlaced monogram 'mw' is surrounded with a laurel and olive wreath, and a motto is inscribed on a ribbon below."† Rays of gold give an appearance of brilliance to the pieces. A print of the china described is shown here.

Note: The chain on the china plate illustrated actually has fifteen names in the elliptical links—Maine and Vermont having been included.

Two other noteworthy examples of articles made during the period of this Administration are included here:

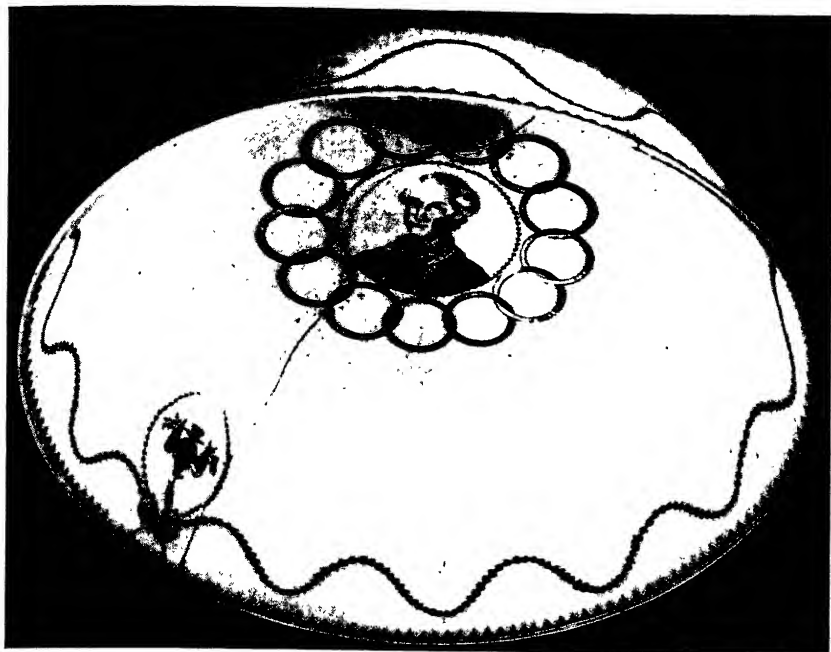
"A hand painted china bowl with polychrome decorations is on display at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. The card accompanying this treasured historical piece states that the bowl‡ was made for General Richard Humpton about 1789.

\* A few pieces of this ware are preserved at Arlington House.

† Taken from *Mount Vernon and its Association* by Benson J. Lossing.

‡ The china bowl is reproduced here by permission of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

## The Linked Colonial Circle



*Historical China Bowl*

The unique portrait of George Washington is surrounded by circles with the names of the thirteen original States. On the side is the eagle—the badge of the Cincinnati.”

A pewter basin listed among the items displayed in the Washington Sesquicentennial Masonic Anniversary Exhibition in 1902, in the city of Philadelphia. The entry was marked as follows:

“Item No. 247 *Antique pewter deep dish*, with the monogram ‘GW’ surrounded with ‘LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT.’

Loaned by Mr. Charles N. Bodey”

## CHAPTER VI

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### *The Displayed Eagle*

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THE Great Seal was designed by Will Barton of Philadelphia, and adopted on June 20, 1782. Charles Thomson, the Secretary of the Confederation Congress, was ordered to have the design executed in metal.

The device of the Great Seal shows the American eagle displayed proper; holding in his beak a scroll, inscribed with this motto, viz.: "*E Pluribus Unum*," and in his dexter talon, a palm or an olive branch; in the other a bundle of thirteen arrows; all proper.

For the Crest. Over the head of the eagle, which appears above the escutcheon, a glory, or breaking through a cloud, proper, and surrounding thirteen stars, forming a constellation.

The escutcheon or shield is borne on the breast of the American eagle without any other support.

Shortly after the adoption of the Great Seal, New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts stamped coins with the eagle displayed on either the obverse or reverse.

One of the first references to *an eagle on buttons* was made by Tench Coxe, in October 1787, in an address on *Federal Manufactures in America*. The text, in part, follows:

# The Displayed Eagle

## WINTER CLOTHES

“Abstinence from foreign manufactures and the use of things made at home seem to be the wish of all. It is therefore to be hoped that the expensive article of foreign buttons will be omitted in making up our winter clothes. . . . cloth, cassimer, cotton and silk may be suited with a button covered with the same. Even a silver button will be more economical in the end, than the Birmingham button at ten pence, to fourteen pence. The former will last for life and for the life of a son. Deduct from the first cost of 12 silver buttons, the first cost of 12 Birmingham buttons, and the remainder will not exceed the value of the silver; another year saves the cost of the silver, and it remains clear gain. The Birmingham button is the wear of the year; the other, continues both a button and a valuable metal for years, and for lives. I acknowledge it a more expensive button than we have any occasion for, and than we ought to get, considering money matters only; but we must take in every consideration. *They are made by tradesmen among ourselves*, thereupon it is only putting money out of our right pocket into our left. It is not giving money away to a stranger, i.e. a Birmingham manufacturer. In the second place it would for a time stop the importation of costly foreign buttons, which is of great consequence. Breaking through bad habits is a great matter. The silver button, *engraved with the continental or federal eagle, would render it a sort of national button by agreement*, and not by the improper force of law, which should not descend to or encroach upon such things. As observed before, I do not urge this button; but only say it is beyond all comparison more *frugal and patriotic*, than to import buttons of half the value, and a fifteenth part of the duration from Birmingham. . . .”  
(Italics mine)

## Washington Historical Buttons

### EAGLE BUTTONS WORN BY WASHINGTON

In the *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, by William Dunlap (1834), is the following account of William Rollinson, who made the buttons which George Washington wore at his first Inauguration.

“William Rollinson (1789), this worthy man, and very estimable citizen is a native of England, born in year 1762. He was, in his youth, brought up to the business of chaser of fancy buttons, and came to New York with the view of pursuing the same, but soon found, that little or nothing of the kind, was practiced or sought after here. He had not long after his arrival, some work in the way of his original employment, the remembrance of which gratifies the sturdy old gentleman to this day.

“General Knox, first Secretary of War, under the federal government employed Mr. Rollinson to *chase the arms of the United States upon a set of gilt buttons, for the coat which was worn by General Washington, on the memorable day of his Inauguration as President.*

“Soon after, General Knox called to make payment, but the young Englishman had caught the spirit of the country of his choice, and would receive no compensation; declaring that he was more than paid, by having the honour of working for such a man, on such an occasion.”

Another reference to William Rollinson is found in the work by Stephen Decatur, Jr., published in 1933. This is *Private Affairs of George Washington*, from the *Records and Accounts of Tobias Lear, Esquire, his Secretary*, and it cites a statement in Lear's diary that the Inaugural suit was of fine brown broadcloth manufactured at Hartford, Connecticut, and was trimmed with *gilt buttons* made as a gift to Washington for this particular occasion. The buttons, says Lear, were *engraved with the Arms of the United States* by the engraver William Rollinson, who later became a famous copper engraver.

## The Displayed Eagle

The next account was recorded in a diary by an eye-witness to Washington's Inauguration. This man was William Maclay, United States Senator, from Pennsylvania, 1789-1791. His *Journal* was his own private diary into which he recorded the events, each day after the Sessions of the Senate had ended. It is very accurately written and because of this fact ranks as a guide for historians today. It begins with the Inauguration of Washington on the familiar spot in Wall Street, New York City. (For the most part Maclay's *Journal* was written while Congress was in Session there, the removal to Philadelphia having been made only a short time before he ceased to be a Senator.)

Regarding Washington's appearance on the 30th day of April, 1789, the day of his Inauguration as President, Senator Maclay records:

"After the oath was administered on the gallery, and the cheers of the populace rent the air, the company returned into the Senate Chamber, the Senators and Representatives to their seats and the President took the chair and addressed those assembled." Then Senator Maclay adds further for the benefit of posterity that: "Washington was dressed in deep brown, *with metal buttons, with an eagle on them*, white stockings, a bag and sword." (Italics mine)

Several visits recently to the firm of Ames and Rollinson, present day successors to William Rollinson, failed to locate any pertinent information regarding either the records or drawings of the device executed on the buttons so described. This fact is not too surprising, for, according to Dunlap, Rollinson was engaged by Secretary Knox who in all probability gave the order orally. Since no bill was presented, no record was kept. A search of the Knox correspondence, located in numerous places failed to bring to light any additional facts regarding the order. The monograph entitled *William Rollinson, Engraver*, prepared by Robert W. Reid, M.D., and Charles Rollinson, incorporates the Dunlap text as referring to the buttons made by Rollinson for Washington's Inaugural suit.

## Washington Historical Buttons

In the search through the Knox and Washington correspondence which has been carefully preserved, two important letters referring to these famous buttons did come to light.

The first letter under date of New York, March 27, 1789, refers to the "Federal buttons manufactured in the City." The letter is from Secretary Knox to General Washington; the entire letter is reproduced here.

New York 27 March 1789

My dear Sir

The house of Representatives want yet four members and the Senate two. The first will not be formed until Monday, and the Senate probably not until Wednesday next the fifth of April.

Col<sup>o</sup> Hanson of Alexandria is so good as to take charge of the cloth sent you from the Hartford manufactory, and also of some federal buttons manufactured in this City, both of which will I hope safely reach you.

I am Dear Sir

Your most Obedient  
humble Servant

H. Knox

His Excellency  
Gen<sup>l</sup> Washington

The second letter dated Mount Vernon, April 10th, 1789, is from Washington to Major General Knox, notifying him of the receipt of the buttons and requesting him to procure, "Six more of the large (engraved) buttons."

This letter, in Washington's own handwriting is here shown in its entirety with the outside address.

New York 27<sup>th</sup> March 1789

My dear Sir

The House of Representatives must  
get four members and the Senate  
two. The first will not be formed until  
Monday, and the Senate probably will  
not till Wednesday next the 31<sup>st</sup> of  
April.

Col<sup>o</sup>. Hanson of Connecticut  
is so good as to take charge of the  
cloth sent you from the Putnam  
manufactory, and also of some federal  
buttons manufactured in this City, both  
of which will I hope safely reach you.

I am Dear Sir

Your most Obedient  
humble servant  
His Excellency <sup>and Washington</sup> ~~Washington~~ H. M. D.



3796  
Mount Vernon April 10. 1789

My dear Sir,

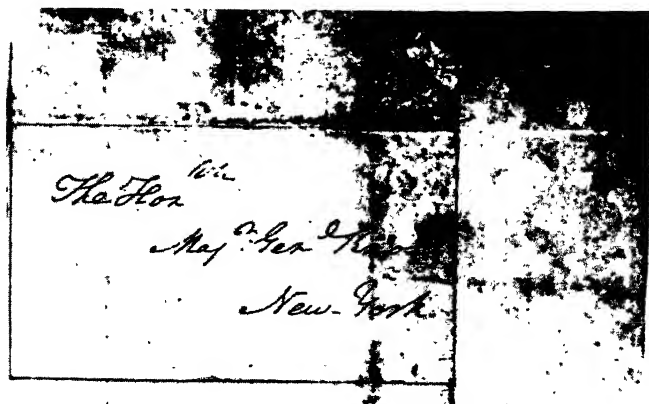
The cloth & buttons which accompany your favor of the 30<sup>th</sup> ult. came safe by Col<sup>l</sup>: Harrison, and really do credit to the manufactures of this Country. — As it requires six more of the large (engraved) button to trim the Coat in the manner I wish it to be, I would thank you, my good Sir, for procuring that number and retaining them in your hands until my arrival at New York. —

Not to contemplate (though it is a serious object) the loss which you say the General Government will sustain in the article of Import, the stupor, or listlessness with which our public measures seem to be pervaded is, to me, matter of deep regret. — Indeed it has so strange an appearance that I cannot but wonder how men who solicit public confidence or who are over-ruled upon to accept of it can reconcile such conduct with their own feelings of propriety. — The delay is inauspicious to say the best of it and the world must condemn it. — With sentiments of the sincerest friendship, — I am Y<sup>r</sup>. affectionate

P.S. The advice by the Mail of this Evening ask, surely, inform us of a Quorum in both Houses of Congress. —

G: Washington

## The Displayed Eagle



Mount Vernon April 10<sup>th</sup> 1789

My dear Sir,

The cloth & Buttons which accompanied your favor of the 30<sup>th</sup> Ult, came safe by Col<sup>o</sup> Hanson; and really do credit to the manufactures of this Country.—As it requires Six more of the large (engraved) buttons to trim the Coat in the manner I wish it to be, I would thank you, my good Sir, for procuring that number and retaining them in your hands until my arrival at New York.—

Not to contemplate (though it is a serious object) the loss which you say the General Government will sustain in the article of Import, the stupor, or listlessness with which our public measures seem to be pervaded, is, to me, matter of deep regret.—Indeed it has so strange an appearance that I cannot but wonder how men who solicit public confidence or who are ever prevailed upon to accept of it can reconcile such conduct with their own feelings of propriety.—The delay is inauspicious to say the best of it and the world must condemn it.—With sentiments of the sincerest friendship,—I

affectionate  
G. Washington

P.S.

The advices by the mail of this Evening will, surely, inform us of a Quorum in both Houses of Congress.—

## Washington Historical Buttons

A bit of recapitulation may be done here. The Great Seal was adopted in 1782. In 1787, Tench Coxe advised the use of the eagle upon the American buttons of the period; his expression was, "engraved with the continental or federal eagle." Rollinson received the order from Secretary Knox to "*engrave the Great Seal upon a set of gilt buttons*" for the Inaugural suit to be worn by Washington. Dunlap recorded Secretary Knox's order to Rollinson and noted that Knox called for the buttons, which he turned over later to Colonel Hanson to deliver in person to Washington,—as is also stated in the letter by General Knox of March 27, 1789. Tobias Lear, Washington's secretary, made note that the buttons worn on the Inaugural suit were gilt, and bore the *Great Seal of the United States*. Washington acknowledged the buttons and requested, "six more of the large (engraved) buttons,"—which implies that there may have been small buttons also.



WILLIAM ROLLINSON  
1762-1842

## The Displayed Eagle

In order that we may observe the type and style of the work done by William Rollinson, a copy of a portrait\* of George Washington engraved by this artist is shown as the frontispiece in this book. It was made during Washington's second Administration and was published by I. Reid, New York, 1796, and it appeared also in the monograph by Robert W. Reid and Charles Rollinson.

The name of William Rollinson and his place of business are recorded in the early Business Directories of New York City. A copy of his business card is reproduced here: the original copper-plate is in the possession of the Rollinson family.

Note: The cuts of the Washington portrait, the Rollinson portrait and the Rollinson business card are by courtesy of Ames & Rollinson.

\* The original work is in the possession of the family of the late Charles Rollinson.



## CHAPTER VII

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### *Titles of Respect Applied to Washington*

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#### THE MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE

THE MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE. A scanning of the periodicals of the period, makes it quite evident that a heated discussion was being conducted through the medium of newspapers in the various cities, regarding the titles of respect by which our first President should be addressed. The Following quotations taken from *The Gazette Of The United States* are illustrations of this:

"July 15, 1789. The *Title* of our First Magistrate should be expressive of his position and dignity as representing the MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE, bearing their sword of justice to execute their laws: To treat in their names with the sovereign power of other nations; and in their name to compel other nations to fulfill their engagements, and to observe the laws of nations—What words are so expressive and suitable to this great Representative of the *People's Majesty* as, '*His Majesty, The President of the United States*'."

"August 12, 1789. As for the article about 'titles of nobility,' it is too absurd to merit a minute's attention. This same article was in the Confederation; but was never even supposed to affect titles given to Constitutional officers. Besides the title of *His Majesty* would not be a *title of nobility*, but a title of sovereignty,—a title which the person who represents the 'MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE' of the United States, well deserved—and which he will ere long receive. The Supreme Executive will then be considered in Europe, as on a par with their Sovereigns—and that efficiency be found in the head of our Empire, which the voice of the whole Continent has been so long and so loudly calling for."

## Titles of Respect Applied to Washington

"August 22, 1789. Every man finds himself more or less the dupe of flattery, but few suspect how often the public at large are seduced by compliments and intrigue. I have seen a large crowd of people thrown into acclamations of joy, at hearing the enchanting sound of MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE. Each man takes a good share of the compliment to himself, and extols to the skies the worthless fellow who declaims in such fascinating language. Wealth and fair dealing have no such captivating effect."

According to the symbolism of medals, a ray or beam of light means *majesty*, *strength*, and *power*. If the rays are pointed, it suggests both splendor and brightness issuing from the countenance of an extraordinary person. The rising sun is emblematic of the rising empire, and Washington was spoken of as the President of the Rising Empire. A toast, given on April 21, 1789, prior to the Inauguration was, "May the sun rise to him many, many years and every year Hail him, like many past, The Father of his Country."

Thus we see that before, during, and after Washington's Inauguration,—in fact, well through his Administration,—the following appellations came into use: Father of his Country; Protector of America; Savior of his Country; Chief Magistrate of the Public; Columbia's Favorite Son; The Nation's Hero; First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of his Countrymen. These with Long, Long Live George Washington and Long Live the President; *Pater Patriae* and The Majesty of the People, expressed the admiration of the American people.

### PATER PATRIAE

PATER PATRIAE. The title *Pater Patriae* was given to Washington on numerous occasions during his lifetime. In his *Memoirs of Washington*, George Washington Parke Custis, endearingly refers to our first President, a score of times as the *Pater Patriae*.

## CHAPTER VIII

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### *The Second Inauguration*

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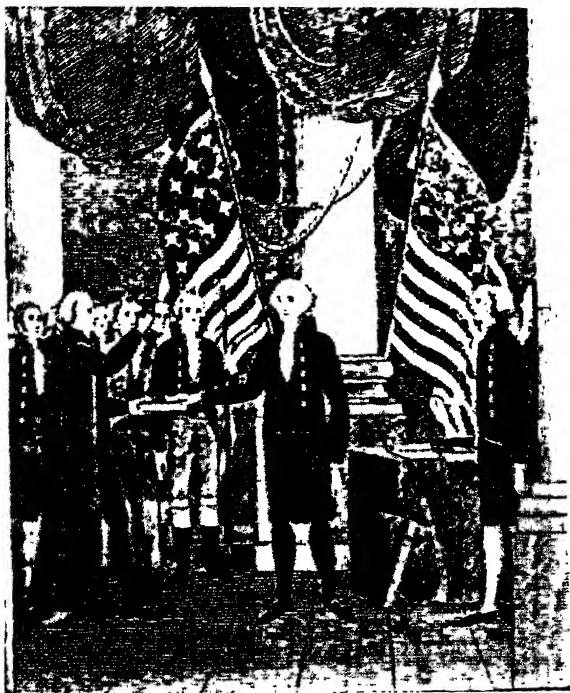
AT THE time of Washington's second Administration our Country faced a very serious situation. France and England were at war and this placed us in an embarrassing position. While we declared ourselves neutral, nevertheless our flag was insulted and our seamen impressed. Both the war in Europe and the French Revolution did much also to widen the breach between the rising political parties in the United States. Affairs reached a critical state with the insulting misconduct of the new French minister, Genet, in 1793. America was divided; some citizens stood with Genet. President Washington was actually attacked in venomous newspaper articles. Besides, we were inwardly torn by factions. On the Western frontier the Indians were hostile; and the increasing discord in Washington's cabinet resulted in the resignations of Hamilton and Jefferson. All in all, the beginning of the second Administration was marked by seriousness and solemnity, not at all suggestive of festivity nor inducing hilarious or even enthusiastic celebrations.

Whether any Inaugural buttons were made expressly for the second Inauguration is at the moment problematical. Until further evidence is forthcoming, the writer would ascribe all of the Inaugural buttons to the period of Washington's first Administration.

From the limited accounts in the various contemporary newspapers, at the time of Washington's second Inauguration, it is very evident that there was little public demonstration or spectacular celebrations. An account of the happenings on this occasion is taken from a Philadelphia newspaper, *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser*:

## The Second Inauguration

*"March 4th.* This day, the President of the United States will take the oath of office at noon in the Senate Chamber, in consequence of his reelection to the most important station which he has always filled with so much true dignity and Patriotism."



*Washington Taking the Oath of Office, Second Administration, March 4, 1793*

*"March 5th.* Yesterday, 4th March 1793, our beloved and venerable George Washington, came to the Senate Chamber of Congress, and took the usual oath of office, which was administered to him by Judge Cushing, at noon, in presence of an immense concourse of his fellow citizens, members of both Houses of the United States Legislature, and several foreign ministers, consuls &c. There was likewise an assemblage of ladies attending



## Washington Historical Buttons

on this solemn occasion, and the day was extremely serene; for Providence has always smiled on the day of this man, and on the glorious cause which he has ever espoused, of LIBERTY and EQUALITY.

“After taking the oath, the President retired, as he had come, without pomp or ceremony; but on his departure from the House the people could no longer refrain obeying the genuine dictates of their hearts and they saluted him with three cheers.”

*From Pennsylvania in American History*, by Pennypacker, mention is made of Washington's second Inauguration, the 4th of March, 1793. It states that Washington wore a rich velvet suit, with diamond knee buckles, and large square silver shoe buckles. It mentions also, that Thomas Jefferson stood at the head of the Senate, wearing a blue coat single breasted, with bright basket buttons.

## CHAPTER IX

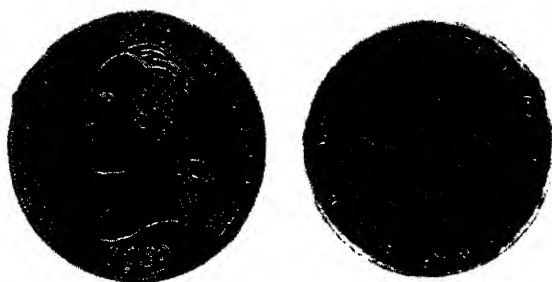
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### *Descriptions of Inaugural Buttons*

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#### DATED INAUGURAL BUTTONS



I

2

1 · WASHINGTON PROFILE WITH DATE. Solid; flat; bronze; 33 mm. Profile portrait of Washington facing right, with the legend, "REMEMBER MARCH FOURTH 1789," encircling. The design is hand engraved. The edge is beaded but not raised.

Note. The photograph and description of this button are by courtesy of the United States National Museum, Washington, D.C.

2 · EAGLE WITH DATE. Solid; flat; 34 mm. Eagle displayed with rayed sun above and the legend, "MEMORABLE ERA MARCH THE FOURTH 1789," encircling. All parts of the device are impressed.

- |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| A. Brass  | Back: Blank |
| B. Copper | Back: Blank |

## Washington Historical Buttons

### THE "GW" IN OVAL CENTER BUTTONS

This Washington button pattern has been found in several related varieties. The general appearance is similar but there are distinct differences in the size and style of the lettering, and the size and shape of the depressed backgrounds. These differences prove that at least two separate and distinct dies were used.

The device consists of "GW" in a central depressed oval, and the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," in a semicircular depressed band above. Both depressions have a stippled background.



3



4

*Note. Authenticated specimens of this button have oval centers which vary in size from 16 x 8.5 to 18 x 9.2 mm.*

3 - "GW" in OVAL CENTER, I. Solid; very slightly convex; 34 mm. "GW" in 16 x 8.5 mm. oval center, with the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," above.

A. Copper

Back: Blank

B. Pewter, probably molded (later?)

4 - "GW" in OVAL CENTER, II. Solid; flat; edge slightly beveled; 34.5 mm. "GW" in 17.5 x 9.2 mm. oval center, with the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," in slightly different size and style of letter above.

A. Copper

Back: Blank

5 - DATED "GW" in OVAL CENTER. Solid; copper; 34 mm. "GW" in Oval Center, Type I, with legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," and in addition, "30 April 1789" incised below. This date is incised whereas the rest of the design is stamped.

Back: Blank

## Description of Inaugural Buttons



5

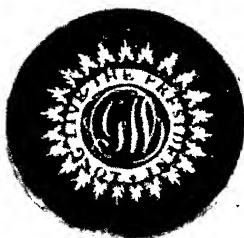


6

6 · “GW” IN OVAL CENTER, III. Solid; 28 mm. “GW” in oval center, with no legend above. This button was illustrated in the *New York American*, February 16, 1920.

### THE SCRIPT “GW” MONOGRAM, “LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT” BUTTONS

There are four distinct patterns of buttons with this same script “GW” monogram, and central “LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT” legend. Two have an intermediate rayed section, with different border designs; a third has a salient motif design; the fourth is the familiar thirteen linked States border pattern.



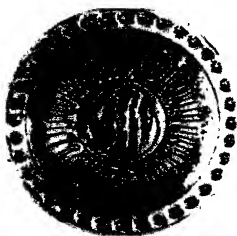
7 : “GW” WITH SALIENT BORDER. Solid; flat; 32 mm. In this button the “GW” monogram, and the legend, “LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT,” is encircled by a salient motif, which is repeated twenty-three times.

A. Brass. Back: Blank

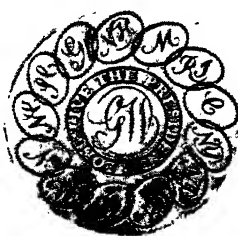
## Washington Historical Buttons

8 · "GW" WITH INDENTEE BORDER. Solid; flat; 32 mm. In addition to the "GW" monogram and the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," there is an intermediate rayed section, with a border design of thirty-three hexagonal punch marks, inside of the indentee border.

A. Copper      Back: Blank



9



10

9 · "GW" WITH CROSS IN CIRCLE BORDER. Solid; flat; 33 mm. In addition to the "GW" monogram and the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," there is an intermediate rayed circle, with an outside border of thirty-six circular punch marks, with a raised cross design within.

A. Copper      Back: Blank

10 · "GW" WITH LINKED STATES BORDER. Solid; flat; 34 mm. The "GW" monogram and the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," is encircled by the familiar thirteen linked States impressed border design.

- A. Brass      Back: Blank
- B. Brass      Back: Shows design pressed through
- C. Pewter      Back: Blank
- D. Pewter      Back: Blank

Molded and copper plated; 3 mm. thick; later?

11 · DOTTED SCRIPT "GW." Solid; flat; 35.4 mm. Dotted script "GW" monogram, in central circular depression. In the outer depressed circular band the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," and a six-pointed star within a circle of 12 dots. Both depressions have a stippled background.

- A. Brass      Back: Blank
- B. Brass      Back: Design through on back

## Description of Inaugural Buttons



11



12

12 · THE PLAIN ROMAN "GW." Solid; flat; edge slightly beveled; 36 mm. "GW" in the center with the encircling legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," and a small diamond figure below. The entire design is impressed.

A. Brass      Back: Blank



13

13 · "GW" WITH THIRTEEN STARS. Solid; flat; 34 mm. In addition to the "GW" monogram and the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," thirteen stars and two floral groups form a circle within the milled border. All parts of the device are impressed, except the legend, which is raised.

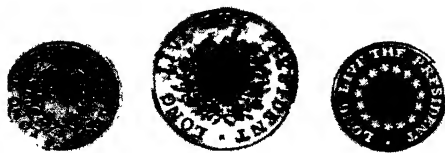
A. Brass      Back: Unidentified engraved marks  
suggestive of previously used metal.

Note: It is possible that this button may be the specimen exhibited in the Masonic Temple in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November,

## Washington Historical Buttons

1902, and listed in the *Memorial Volume* of the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the initiation of George Washington into the Fraternity of Freemasons. The record states:

"No. 230. Gold button worn by an officer at the First Inauguration of Washington in 1789. In the center 'gw' surrounded by 'LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT,' and 13 stars."



14

15

16

### THE LAUREL WREATH AND FIFTEEN STAR PATTERNS

14 · SMALL LAUREL WREATH. Solid; flat; 15 mm. A laurel wreath in the center with the legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," encircling. The entire design is impressed.

A. Copper was silvered. Back: Blank

15 · LAUREL WREATH WITH STAR. Solid; flat; 20 mm. A laurel wreath in the center, with the encircling legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," and a small star. The entire design is impressed.

A. Copper, was silvered. Back: Blank

B. Brass, gift Back: Blank

16 · FIFTEEN STAR PATTERN. Solid; flat; 15 mm. An inner circle of fifteen six-pointed stars, with the encircling legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT." The device is impressed.

Note: Only one specimen of this pattern has been reported to date.

A. Brass Back: Blank

## Description of Inaugural Buttons

### EAGLE WITH STAR PATTERNS



17 · SMALL EAGLE WITH STAR. Solid; flat; 18 mm. An eagle displayed, head to right, with shield on breast. Six-pointed star above with wavy ray between each point. Entire device is impressed. Thirty-seven somewhat triangular impressions make up the narrow border.

Thus far this unique button is the only Inaugural pattern to be reported in both the coat and sleeve sizes.

A. Brass      Back: Blank



18



19

*Notes. Authenticated specimens of this button vary slightly in diameter. Several are also known to be without the impressed border.*

18 · EAGLE WITH STAR, I. Solid; flat; 34.8 mm. An eagle displayed, head to right, with shield on breast. Six-pointed star above with a wavy ray between each point. Entire device is impressed. Sixty-three square impressions make up the narrow border.

A. Brass      Back: Blank

19 · EAGLE WITH STAR, II. Solid; flat; 34.8 mm. An eagle displayed, head to right, with shield on breast. Six-pointed star above, with wavy



## Washington Historical Buttons

ray between each point. Entire device is impressed. Fifty-four square impressions make up the narrow border.

- |                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| A. Copper, was silvered | Back: Blank                  |
| B. Copper, was silvered | Back: Design pressed through |
| C. Brass                | Back: Blank                  |



20



21

20 · EAGLE WITH STAR, III. Solid; flat; 34.4 mm. An eagle displayed, head to right, with shield on breast. Six-pointed star above, with wavy ray between each point. Entire device is impressed. Seventy-two square impressions make up the narrow border.

- A. Brass      Back: Blank

21 · EAGLE WITH SUN. Solid; flat; 34 mm. A smaller eagle displayed, head to right, with shield on breast. Rayed sun above. Twenty-one oblong punch marks separated by triangular punch marks within a dotted circle form the border. The entire device is impressed.

- A. Brass      Back: Blank

### RELATED EAGLE BUTTONS

22 · EAGLE WITH GLORY. Solid; flat; 32 mm. An eagle displayed, facing left, shield on breast. Above, thirteen stars and clouds forming a glory. All in low relief.

- A. Copper, was gilt      Back: Blank

23 · EAGLE WITH MOTTO. Solid; flat; 35 mm. An eagle displayed, head to right, shield on breast having vertical columns of stars and

## Description of Inaugural Buttons

horizontal stripes. In the eagle's beak is a scroll inscribed with the motto—*e pluribus unum*. The scroll is surrounded by thirteen stars. All parts of the device are impressed, except the lettering on the scroll, which is raised.



22



24

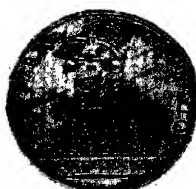
24 · PEWTER EAGLE WITH STAR. Solid; flat; cast; 35.7 mm. An eagle displayed, head to left, with shield on breast. Eight-pointed star above. Device is impressed.

A. Pewter      Back: Circular hub mark around shank

## BUTTONS WITH TITLES OF RESPECT



25



26



27

25 · THE MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE. Solid; flat; 31 mm. The majestic glory of the heavens with the sun rising above the clouds is shown in

## Washington Historical Buttons

the center. The legend, "THE MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE," encircles the border.

A. Brass      Back: Blank

26 · THE PATER PATRIAE, I. Silver on copper; flat; 25 mm. Bone back having four holes strung with cat-gut. Portrait of Washington in uniform, with the legend, "GENERAL WASHINGTON," encircling; "PATER PATRIAE," is below. The design is impressed.

27 · THE PATER PATRIAE, II. Was silvered on copper; flat; 25 mm. Shell backed with pewter with an imbedded iron shank. Portrait of Washington in uniform, with the legend, "GENERAL WASHINGTON," encircling; "PATER PATRIAE" is below. The design is impressed.

### ASSOCIATED SPECIMENS



28

29

30

31

28 · "GW" WITH EAGLE AND LIBERTY CAP. Solid; flat; copper, was gilt, 22 mm. The letters "G" and "W" are placed above the wings of a displayed eagle. Liberty Cap above. (Photograph is of plaster cast.) Back: "E & D" above; "GILT" below.

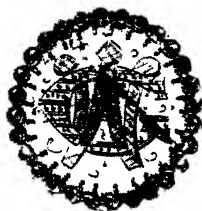
29 · "GW" WITH EAGLE. Solid; flat; copper, was gilt; 25 mm. Foliated script "GW" monogram below, which appears to be hand engraved. Impressed eagle above. Back: Blank.

30 · "GW" WITH LIBERTY CAP. Solid; flat; copper; 25 mm. Foliated script "GW" monogram below, with the Liberty Cap above. Device appears to be hand engraved. Back: Blank.

## Description of Inaugural Buttons

31 · "GW" WITH PROFILE. Solid; cast; flat; pewter; 19 mm. Profile head of Washington, facing right. Thirteen stars, not uniform in size, encircling. The letters "GW" below. The button is crudely made and appears to be an old specimen. Back: Blank.

### UNAUTHENTICATED SPECIMENS



32



33

32 · "GW" MONOGRAM. Solid; flat; Sheffield silver; 25 mm. A hand engraved "GW" monogram, with an elaborately chased border. This button has all the appearances of an old button. Back: Blank.

33 · "GW" ETCHED. Solid; slightly convex; tombac; 25 mm. The letters "GW" and the border are acid etched. The button itself appears to be an old button.



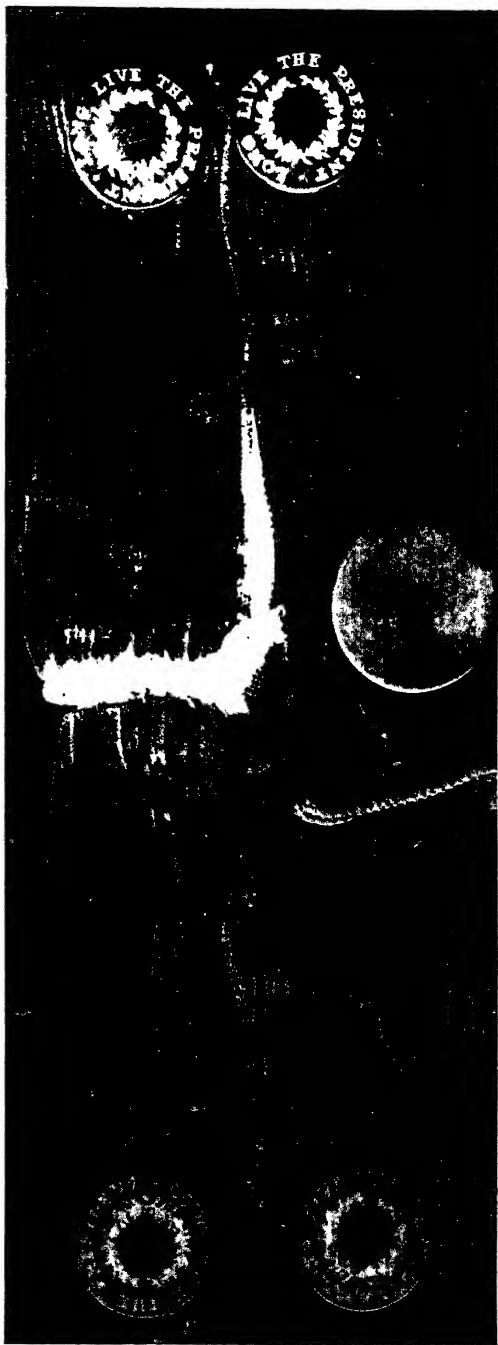
These eighteenth century ribbed velvet trousers are snuff brown in color. They are sewed by hand and have a homespun linen back gusset. Eyelets are worked into the velvet for lacing. The back part of the trousers is folded over against the top front so that the buttons may all be seen. The four brace but-

*Eighteenth Century Ribbed  
Velvet Trousers*

*From the family of Ruben Smith  
of Sudbury, Massachusetts. Owned  
by Mrs. Eric Hudson, of Maine*

tons are the Laurel Wreath with Star pattern. The buttons are gilt and measure 20 mm. To date, this is the only article of clothing which has been reported that has the original Inaugural buttons still intact. They are held firmly in place with homespun linen tape.

*A section of the trousers showing the four Laurel Wreath with Star buttons used as brace buttons*



## CHAPTER X

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### *Continued Interest*

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INTEREST in these Washington buttons has continued through the years, and references to them have been made in various magazines and newspapers. Several such references which are accompanied with drawings of the buttons under discussion are included here.



1. Ballou's *Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, for July 7, 1855, pictures the Washington button in the Museum of the Alexandria Masonic Lodge. The artist's drawing is reproduced here.

2. Taken from *The Record of the Year*, edited by Frank Moore, is an interesting news item dated 1876. The clue given was followed through, and even though seventy years had elapsed, some of the buttons from this coat were still to be found in the possession of the family! They are not for sale. The news item reads as follows:

## Continued Interest

"Some years ago when the Lascelle House of Newport, Rhode Island, was undergoing demolition, a gentleman's dresscoat trimmed with large buttons was found. These buttons contain, in each of the thirteen links running around the margin, the initials of the original thirteen States. Within the circle formed by these links is a smaller circle in which is 'Long Live The President' inside of which are the initials 'GW.' The owner of this set of buttons is Mrs. Charles Tripp, of Newport."

3. *The Magazine of American History*, for April 1883, pictures three buttons from the collection of Asa Bird Gardiner of New York. They are illustrated here.



4. *The Magazine of American History*, for February 1884, carried a letter to the Editor, dated December 24, 1883, from Theo. F. Wolfe, M.D., with the illustration of the Washington Button, shown here. Both are here reproduced.



"CENTRAL INITIALS OF WASHINGTON;  
THOSE OF ORIGINAL STATES WITHIN OVALS OF BORDER"



## Washington Historical Buttons

"WASHINGTON BUTTONS—A copper button, partially plated with silver, was found in the dust of a country highway some years ago and came into my possession. It is of comparatively fine finish and workmanship. An antiquarian informs me that he has seen three similar buttons in possession of different persons, who call them 'Washington buttons.' What is known of the history of those buttons and of the occasion of their being made?

"Jersey City, Dec. 24, 1883."

"Theo. F. Wolfe, M.D.

This button became the subject of an interesting correspondence which was carried on through the medium of various newspapers and magazines in New York and Philadelphia, and extended over a period of eighteen years. From this correspondence one gleans that the owner of this button, Dr. Theodore F. Wolfe of Succasunna, New Jersey, was in 1898 in communication with A. M. Barber, of the Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., who also owned a Washington button. Several other persons became interested and the columns of *The Evening Bulletin*, from 1892 to 1901, carried a number of letters from subscribers who owned or knew of someone who had a Washington button.

The column was variously headed: "A WASHINGTON BUTTON"; ANOTHER "WASHINGTON BUTTON," or THE "WASHINGTON BUTTON" AGAIN. Under date of 1892 we read the following account:

### ANOTHER "WASHINGTON BUTTON."

#### HAS IT A LOCAL HISTORY?

"Half a century ago, a then resident of Kenvil, found upon the roadside in that place a metallic button which has come into my possession, and proves to be a 'Washington Button,' different from those hitherto described by antiquarians. It is of copper, one and three-eighths inches in diameter, flat and rather thin. Originally it was lightly plated with silver, but, when found, the plating had been so worn that the baser metal was partially exposed and the finder, highly prizing the relic, caused it to be replated with gold.

## Continued Interest

"The center bears the initials 'gw' in graceful and ornate script; surrounding these is a circlet bearing in low relief the legend 'LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT' in Roman capitals; outside the circlet and occupying the circumference of the disc is a series of thirteen engraved ellipses obliquely linked together, each oval being inscribed with the initial of one of the original thirteen States in script, the whole design being elegant and finely executed. Soon after it came into my possession it was exhibited at a session of the New York Historical Society where it excited much interest and discussion, but nothing of its history was adduced. At the request of my friend, Mrs. Lamb, of the *Magazine of American History*, I prepared an account and description which was published, with an illustration of the button, in the pages of that periodical. Readers who had seen or who had any knowledge of such a button were invited to correspond with the editor, but, although the magazine has a large circulation in all parts of the country, no response was made at the time. A year later, however, a resident of the vicinage of Morristown called upon me at the college and showed a similar button which he said had been found near Succasunna (N.J.). This was nearly or quite ten years ago; unable to procure any history of the relic, I dismissed the matter and might never have thought of it again had I not very recently seen a third exactly corresponding button in the hands of Mr. Peter Applegit of Schooley's Mountain, who had found it at Port Morris.

"The buttons were manifestly made during the Presidency of Washington; probably subsequent to 1789 (since there were then only eleven (11) States) and they were designed to in some way celebrate the much—not to say TOO much—celebrated George. Whatever the event which occasioned the making of the buttons, Washington's progress through New Jersey enroute to his inauguration or what not—it is strange that the only three specimens known to be in existence should have been found in Morris county and within the boundaries of Roxbury. May they, therefore, have been intended to commemorate some local event?

"Probably this publication will bring to light more of the but-

## Washington Historical Buttons

tons; it is to be hoped that it may also serve to reveal their history and purpose.

“Theo. F. Wolfe.

“Succasunna, Sept. 10th, 1892”

Years passed on, and other correspondents expressed their opinions. Two doctors whiled away many hours in conjecture and correspondence regarding the purpose for which these buttons were created. From Dr. G. G. Faught of Philadelphia to Dr. Theodore F. Wolfe (in 1901) we note the following:

“... I still think however that there is a possibility of this button having been military. First, because in each instance where I have traced the origin of the button it has had a military connection.

“Second, if there had been ‘hurrah’ enough in G.W.’s political campaign to evolve a button of this kind, it would have been of sufficient note to have been chronicled by some of his biographers.

“Third, had it been political in nature, its usage would have been so widespread, and common as to have determined the existence at this present time of numerous specimens under conditions that would altogether disassociate it from any question of military origin.

“Fourth, had it been political, it would undoubtedly have had such potency as to have impressed itself upon the history of that time, and we would expect to find mention of it in writing such as *Goldwin Smith’s Political History of the United States*, as against such a theory as we find Smith writing as follows: ‘Washington became president by acclamation. At the end of his term of four years he with unfeigned reluctance consented to reelection. For eight years he was in power far more of a King than the Crowned King of England; he not only reigned but governed. He even kept something like royal state, he rode in a coach and four, and at the opening of Congress in a coach and six. His birthday was kept like that of a knight.’

“What more natural then, since the Constitution made him Commander-in-Chief of the Army than for that Army to cry, ‘Long Live The President,’ as the former military had cried ‘Long Live The King’.”

## Continued Interest

Dr. Faught continues in another letter dated May 1901, still discussing the Washington buttons:

“. . . In evidence that it was a military emblem and not a political device we have the following circumstantial evidence:

“First, Mr. Barber of the Department of the Interior gave testimony that the button in his possession was found ‘over sixty years ago, in the ground of my grandfather’s old homestead at Cambridge, Vermont.’ He was a soldier most of the time from Lexington to Yorktown. The button found on the homestead farm of an old Revolutionary Soldier, is much more likely to be a military emblem than a political device.

“Second, Mr. Bennett’s testimony that the button in his possession was found on a farm within five miles of Fort Ticonderoga, and seven miles from Crown Point; both points of which are of military interest.

“Third, the fact that my own button was found in the debris of an old farm house near Valley Forge denotes military aspect.

“In every instance thus far where the finding of one of these buttons is definitely located, there is the immediate association of the presence of the Continental Army. In Mr. Barber’s case, the relation is so clearly established as to not admit of the slightest doubt, for the button was found on the homestead farm of a soldier of the Revolution.

“A few weeks ago I published in the *Sun* (N.Y.) a drawing of my button and a statement that it was used on the uniform of Washington’s Body-Guard, and as yet the Statement has been uncontradicted.”

The *Evening Bulletin* of Philadelphia for June 8, 1901, gives the additional account under the signature of G.N.G.

“. . . For the further information of your correspondent G.G.F. (Dr. Faught) and also for the benefit of your other readers interested in the queries about the ‘Washington Campaign Button,’ I send you a full and more satisfactory statement which will throw additional light on the question and prove conclusively that it is not one of Washington’s so-called Body Guard buttons, but really what I stated it to be in my first communication, a ‘Cam-

## Washington Historical Buttons

paign Button.' It was not, however, used for the same purpose as are our present campaign buttons, but was distributed and worn in commemoration of our first President. I have seen a great many similar buttons, in honor of Jackson, Taylor, Clay, and others, including the up-to-date celluloid affairs of our last Presidential campaign.

"The term 'Washington Guard' applied to Washington's escort and guard by your correspondent 'G.G.F.' should be according to the historian Lossing, 'Commander-in-Chief's Guard.' The uniform of the guard is described in the United States Quartermaster's book, and the coat had many silver buttons, arranged two and two on either breast flap and cuffs.

"Newspaper and magazine articles dated 1883, 1889, 1898, 1900, 1901, tell of the existence of various patterns of these Washington buttons. Several of these authors speak of these buttons as 'campaign buttons.'

"I have heard also of a number of these buttons being found in possession of old coin dealers, who had filed off the shanks so that they would lie flat, and represented them as rare coins. They are not rare, although they bring from five to ten dollars apiece. The very character of the button precludes all possibility of its having been used as a military button, as it has all the 'hurrah' of a campaign button and is not of a military description.

"I have a very large and valuable collection of military buttons from the Revolution down, and none is of such a character as these Washington Buttons.

"I think I have supported my claim that the button was a 'campaign' or 'commemorate' one, and proved conclusively from official data, that it was not worn by the Commander-in-Chief's Guard."

During this period, extending over eighteen years, Dr. Wolfe learned of the existence of nine Washington buttons located in points as far apart as Cambridge, Vermont, and Mecklenburg, North Carolina.

The following article, with artist's sketch of a George Washington button was carried in a Boston newspaper in December, 1899.

## Continued Interest

BUTTON 100 YEARS OLD  
MOST INTERESTING RELIC OF THE DAYS OF  
GEORGE WASHINGTON



"Wilbur F. Brigham, a member of the shoe manufacturing firm of F. Brigham & Co., which has been doing business under the same name for 65 years, has dug out of the office safe at 24 High St., a most interesting relic of the days of Washington.

"It is a Washington button, more than 100 years old. The circular copper disc bears the initials 'G.W.' in the center, and around the edge are the words, 'Long Live the President.'

"This was worn during the term of office of the first chief magistrate of the nation, and is all the more valuable as only four others, similarly designed, are known to be in existence today.

"The button was presented to Mr. Brigham by a member of an old Vermont family, who has since died at the advanced age of 85. The present owner says he thinks more of this relic than of all the ancient coins, canes, war medals, and so on which he possesses.

"Mr. Brigham resides in Hudson."

The article which follows is from *The Providence Journal* (Rhode Island) and it is interesting to note that it refers to the Brigham button illustrated in the preceding article. It also calls attention to another Washington button of the identical pattern owned by Charles F. Curtis.

# Washington Historical Buttons

## A WASHINGTON RELIC COPPER BUTTON OWNED BY CHARLES F. CURTIS OF THIS CITY

"Battered and bent with the changes of a century, an old copper button owned by Charles F. Curtis of this city is one of the most interesting of Washington relics at this time. The button, thin and wide, was worn during the administration of the first President of the United States, and bears on its face the motto 'Long Live the President.' In the centre are the initials 'G.W.'"

"Few of these buttons are known to be in existence. One is owned by Wilbur F. Brigham, a member of the firm of F. Brigham & Co., 24 High street, Boston. Mr. Brigham poked around in his safe until he found his button yesterday, and then placed it on exhibition. He says only four others are known to be in existence. It is probably that that number must now be extended to five for Mr. Curtis does not know that Mr. Brigham is aware of the existence of the one he owns.

"The button is not quite one and three-eighths inches in diameter, and is, as has been said, thin. There is a mark and a projection on the back that looks as if the shank by which the button was held on a coat had been pounded flat. The letters 'G.W.' in the centre are within the oval space, and are raised above the level of the oval stamped place, although no higher than the face of the button.

"The motto, which runs around the edge of the upper half of the button, is made similarly, the letters being much smaller than those in the centre of the button. Mr. Curtis belongs in Nashua, N.H., and is living at 56 Holden Street, while learning his trade at the Brown & Sharpe Manufacturing Company. His button came from his grandmother, who died two years ago at a very advanced age.

"She always said it came from one of the coats of the 'Father of His Country,' but it was probably the earliest attempt at a campaign button in this country. The button owned by Mr. Brigham was given to him by a member of an old Vermont family, who has since died at the advanced age of 85. Both buttons are very highly valued by their present owners."

## Continued Interest

Editorial comment following an interview with Colonel Daniel Stevens, as recorded in the *Providence Telegram* of December 17, 1899, follows:

### A GEORGE WASHINGTON BUTTON

"Col. Daniel Stevens of this town, who has, without doubt, one of the finest collections of military and naval buttons of all nations that there is in the state, is the possessor of a George Washington button about which much has been published during the past week. Col. Stevens says that there are several of the buttons that he knows of, besides the two in Boston and Providence, and a short time ago he purchased one from a coin collector for \$1. The button is of copper, one and three-eighth inches in diameter, and in an oval scroll are the letters 'G. W.' in Roman style, while at the top of the button is the inscription: 'Long Live the President.' Col. Stevens says that the buttons were used on the coats of Washington's body of life guards, and that his information came from an old coin and button collector at Boston, who had looked the matter up and was well posted in regard to historical mementos. Col. Stevens states that there are many G.W. buttons in existence where the G.W. letters are in script."

In 1902, from November 5th to December 5th, a Loan Exhibition of Washingtoniana was arranged under the direction of the G.W. Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania F. & A.M. at the Masonic Temple in Philadelphia. Several Inaugural buttons were displayed. We include them just as they were listed at the time:

"Item No. 230 *Gold Button*, worn by an officer at the first Inauguration of Washington, in 1789. In center 'GW,' surrounded by 'Long Live the President' and thirteen stars.

Loaned by Bro. George P. Rupp

"Item No. 231 *Brass Button*, worn by one of Washington's body-guard at his second Inauguration in 1793. In centre 'GW,' surrounded by 'Long live the President' and the thirteen original States in circles.

Loaned by Bro. George P. Rupp



## Washington Historical Buttons

- "Item No. 345 *Brass Button* worn at second Inauguration of Washington in 1793. In centre 'GW,' with 'Long live the President' in circle near edge.  
Loaned by Bro. George P. Rupp"

The Historical Relics of George Washington, inherited and collected by Mr. Wm. Lanier Washington, were sold at auction in three separate sales in New York City. The following is a record of the Washington Inaugural buttons sold and the prices paid.

*First Sale.* Anderson Galleries, April 19, 1917.

"No. 1. Coat button worn by General Washington, mounted with two contemporary patriotic buttons with the initials 'G.W.' in Center. Marked with the inscription 'Long Live The President.' Two different variations of these rare buttons worn while Washington was President of the United States . . . 3 pieces in frame."

(The price for which they sold was \$160.)

*Second Sale.* American Art Galleries, February 7, 1920.

"No. 292. Coat button worn by General Washington. Military button mounted with two contemporary patriotic buttons bearing the initials 'G.W.' in the center, and the inscription 'Long Live The President.' Two different varieties of these rare buttons worn while Washington was President. Framed."

(The price for which they sold was \$125.)

"No. 294. Two Commemorative Washington buttons, worn at the Inauguration of Gen. Washington, Mar. 4, 1789; one with Coat of Arms and date; the other 'G.W.' and 'Long Live The President.' In crimson morocco case."

Note: The button first described is excessively rare and is the only example ever seen by the present owner.

(The price for which they sold was \$55.)

*Third Sale.* American Art Association, February 22, 1922.

"No. 161. Commemorative Washington Button. American, 1789—Bronze worn at the Inauguration of General Washington. 'G.W.' in oblong cartouche in center and 'Long Live The President.' In mahogany frame, titled."

(The price for which it sold was \$10.)

## Continued Interest

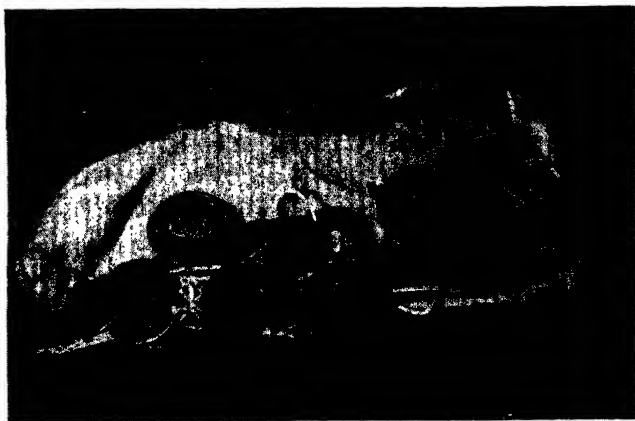
"No. 205. Commemorative Washington Button. With thirteen states and the initials 'G.W.' in the center and the inscription 'Long Live The President'."

(The price for which it sold was \$17.50.)

Of particular interest is the knowledge that at least one of these sets of buttons is in the hands of a present-day collector.\*

Another Washington Inaugural button deserving of particular mention is the Dotted Script "gw" found on a farm near the shores of Lake Ontario, between Whitby and Oshawa, in Ontario, Canada. Many other items such as arrowheads, copper coins and uniform buttons were also excavated here. The owner reported this button in 1938, and to date it is the only known Inaugural button found on foreign soil.

This button bag made its appearance at the Eastern National Button Show held in Springfield, Massachusetts, in May, 1946. The



*Inaugural Buttons with Original Homespun Linen Bag*

owner purchased it with a miscellaneous lot of doll's clothing and masonic badges, from the estate of a ninety-year-old resident, deceased some years prior to this event. Five Inaugural buttons having the "gw" in Oval Center, with the encircling legend, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," were among the group.\*\*

\* See *The National Button Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 44, January, 1948.

\*\* The illustration is by courtesy of the National Button Society. It appeared in the July, 1946, N.B.S. *Quarterly Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 3.

## Washington Historical Buttons

Noteworthy also is the specimen reported in 1947, by an Oregon collector. It came to her with a large collection of Indian trinkets and British uniform buttons which were excavated on a farm along the Cowlitz River in Washington.

A like specimen was reported within the same week by an eastern Massachusetts collector. The buttons are the Eagle with Sun pattern.

This survey would not be complete without mention of that group of serious minded collectors who organized the AMERICAN BUTTONISTS SOCIETY in 1901. The officers were Colonel Daniel Stevens, William L. Calver, Reginald L. Hart, and Captain Luis F. Emilio. These men, together with Oscar T. Barck, Reginald Pelham Bolton, John Ward Dunsmore, George O. W. Servis, Edgar Nye Williams, George Gorham Williams, Borland Williams and Robert M. Hartley, were all deep students of international military history. Each of these collectors had Washington Inaugural buttons in his collection.

The voluminous correspondence carried on by these men, the works of Captain Emilio\*\* and Reginald Pelham Bolton,† and the numerous articles by William L. Calver‡ are an invaluable contribution to the study of historical buttons; and William Calver, as late as January 1926, wrote the article "SPECIALLY DESIGNED COAT BUTTONS USED IN CONNECTION WITH WASHINGTON'S INAUGURATION" which appeared in *The New York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin*.

It is interesting to note that these men did considerable conjecturing concerning the Inaugural buttons just as we are doing today. They, too, were inquiring as to the place of origin, and the names of the makers of the Washington Inaugural buttons; and they were endeavoring also to determine what has become of the buttons engraved by William Rollinson, and worn by George Washington at his Inauguration on April 30, 1789.

The results of the research on this subject contributed by these men, form the firm foundation upon which we are building today.

\*\* *The Emilio Collection of Military Buttons*, 1911.

† *Relics of the Revolution*, 1916.

‡ *The New York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletins*, 1918-1938.

## CHAPTER XI

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### *Additional Buttons Bearing the Portrait of Washington, or Alluding to Him and His Administration*

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#### COMMEMORATIVE WASHINGTON BUTTONS

SINCE the death of Washington in 1799, commemorative celebrations have been held during a number of periods; the Centennial Anniversary of his birth in 1832; the Centennial of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1876; the Centennial of Washington's First Inauguration as President of the United States in 1889; the Sesquicentennial of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1926; and the Bicentennial of Washington's birth in 1932.

In addition to these commemorative celebrations, the 22nd of February, the anniversary of our first President's birth, has been set aside as a holiday in all the States of the Nation, in remembrance of his services to our Country.

It is customary at these times to put on sale various types of commemorative items, many of which bear the likeness of Washington. Buttons have been among such articles sold. An attempt has been made to group the buttons listed here according to the type of construction prevailing at the time of sale.

#### THE LAFAYETTE PRESENTATION BUTTONS, 1824-1825

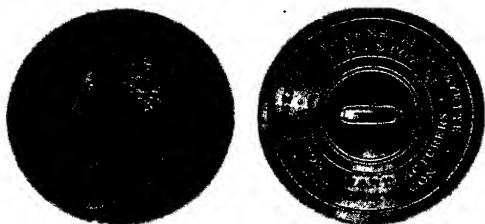
##### THE PROFILE OF WASHINGTON ON A SET OF BUTTONS PRESENTED TO GENERAL LAFAYETTE

The visit of Lafayette to the United States in 1824 as the Nation's Guest was accompanied with great celebrations. For nearly a year as he

## Washington Historical Buttons

traveled throughout our Country many honors and gifts were showed upon him.

Among these gifts was a set of solid gold buttons\* bearing the profile likeness of George Washington. They were made and presented to Lafayette by the firm of Leavenworth, Hayden & Scovill. That the buttons actually were made and presented to Lafayette is an



*Lafayette Presentation Button (enlarged)*

established fact for contemporary newspapers recorded both the purchase of the native North Carolina gold from M. J. Ladd, watchmaker of New York in October 1824, and the exhibition of the buttons in the shop window of this same merchant in July 1825.

The accompanying illustration shows both the front and back of a copy of the Lafayette Presentation button, which was struck for the French Commission at the Centennial held in Philadelphia in 1876. Additional restrikes of the Lafayette Presentation button have been made at various intervals including 1895, 1905, 1914, 1917, 1918, 1922, 1924, 1927, 1928, 1935 and 1946. At the time of the 1946 restrike, the Scovill Manufacturing Company of Waterbury, Connecticut, successors to Leavenworth, Hayden & Scovill, decided to impress the date upon the back of the button, in this case "46."

Because of the historical associations connected with these Lafayette Presentation buttons, they are important collectors' items.

34 · LAFAYETTE PRESENTATION, 1876 restrike; solid; flat; gilt; 20 mm. The profile likeness of Washington facing right. Back: "PRESENTED TO GENERAL LAFAYETTE BY L. H. & S. COVILL / BUTTON MANUFACTURERS WATERBURY, CON."

\* An excellent monograph on the *Lafayette Presentation Buttons* by Edward H. Davis of the Scovill Manufacturing Company will be published shortly by the Mattatuck Historical Society of Waterbury, Connecticut.

## Additional Washington Buttons



34

35

36

Two other buttons also bear the Washington profile likeness. The one has the legend "WASHINGTON INSTITUTE" encircling; the other, a smaller button, is without legend. Each button has a commercial backmark. The Washington Institute button is known as coat size; the other button has been found only in the vest size.

The location of Washington Institute is believed to have been in New York City, and to have been in existence as early as 1827 and as late as 1853.

35 · WASHINGTON INSTITUTE, 1827; solid; flat; gilt; 18 mm. The profile likeness of Washington facing right. Back: "L. H. & SCOVILL. / EXTRA."

36 · WASHINGTON MEDALLION, small, 1827-8-9; solid; flat; gilt; 15 mm. The profile likeness of Washington facing right. Back: "L. H. & s / EXTRA."

### OTHER BUTTONS OF THE 1824-1832 PERIOD



37

38

39

40

37 · Solid; flat; brass; 10 mm. Bust of Washington, facing left. Back: Circle of six diamonds.

38 · Solid; flat, with rim; gilt; 12 mm. Bust of Washington facing left. Back: "EXTRA / COLOUR."

39 · Solid; flat, with rim; gilt; 13 mm. Bust of Washington facing left. Back: "L & KENDRICK / EXTRA."

40 · Solid; flat, with rim; gilt; 14 mm. Bust of Washington facing left. Back: "SUPERIOR."

## Washington Historical Buttons



41

42

43

44

41 · Two-piece; flat; brass; 13 mm. Bust of Washington facing right, within a raised dotted circle. Back: Blank.

42 · Two-piece; flat; brass; 13 mm. Bust of Washington facing right, on a highly raised square frame. Back: Circle of rays.

43 · Two-piece; flat; brass; 15 mm. Bust of Washington facing right, on a raised square (nearly) frame. Back: Circle of rays.

44 · Solid; flat, with rim; brass; 17 mm. Bust of Washington facing right, on a raised square frame. Back: Circle of rays.

## BUTTONS OF THE 1860-1876 PERIOD



45

46

47

48

The ferrotyp, or tintype button was already popular by 1855, and remained so for a long time. Likenesses of Presidents and Civil War Generals are among the historical personages portrayed on these buttons. Four ferrotyp buttons are illustrated; the usual mounting is a tin collet and back, with a metal loop shank.

45 · Head of Washington, facing left with background. 10 mm.

46 · Head of Washington, facing right. 12 mm.

47 · Head of Washington, facing left. 12 mm.

48 · Head of Washington, facing right. 6 mm. Set in red, white and blue frame; brass rimmed.

## Additional Washington Buttons



49

50

51

52

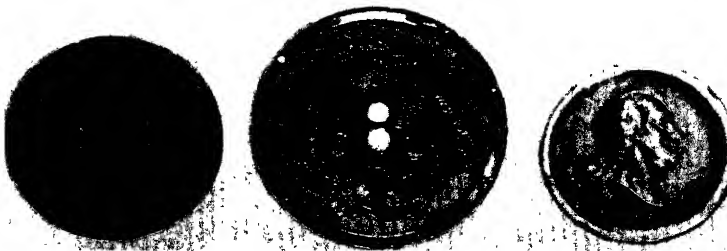
49 · Slightly convex; vegetable ivory; black; 14 mm. Bust of Washington in low relief, facing left, on cross-lined field; laurel wreath border. Back: Self shank.

50 · Two-piece; slightly convex; tin; 20 mm. Transfer print of Washington. Back: Tin, blank.

51 · Solid; flat; silver; 20 mm. Bust of Washington in low relief, set in open laurel wreath. The name, "WASHINGTON," above. Back: Blank.

52 · Two-piece; flat; gilt; 18 mm. Bust of Washington in low relief, facing right. Date, "1776," below. Back: Blank.

Note: Present-day specimens appear with a brass-plated iron cone back.



53

54

55

53 · Pressed horn; black; 28 mm. Head of Washington in relief, facing left. The legend, "GEORGE WASHINGTON," encircling above. Back: "T WELLS INGRAM'S PATENT."

54 · Pressed horn; black; two-hole sew-thru; 33 mm. Heads of Washington and Lincoln facing each other. Five, five-pointed stars



## Washington Historical Buttons

above scroll with "LIBERTY." Names of Washington and Lincoln on scrolls. All on lined field. Back: Pick mark.

55 · Solid; flat; pewter; 25 mm. Bust of Washington in high relief, within raised border. Back: Plain, with copper shank.



56



57



58

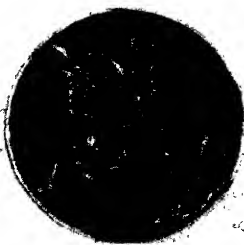
### BUTTONS AFTER THE 1876 PERIOD

56 · Solid; flat; copper; 30 mm. Head of Washington, facing right, in high relief (respoussé). All on a plain field. Back: Blank.

57 · Solid; flat; copper; 25 mm. Raised profile head of Washington, facing left. Back: Blank.



59



60



61

58 · Solid; flat; copper; 34 mm. Profile head of Washington, facing left, with an illegible legend encircling. Back: Blank.

59 · Solid; flat; brass; 23 mm. Head of Washington, facing slightly left, on a plain field. Back: Blank.

## Additional Washington Buttons

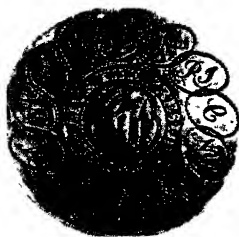
60 · Solid; flat; cast pewter; 33 mm. Washington seated on horse, facing right, in low relief. Back: Blank.

61 · Solid; flat; bronze; 20 mm. Bust of Washington, facing right, on plain field. The legend, "GENERAL WASHINGTON," encircling. Back: Blank.

### THE 1889 COMMEMORATIVE WASHINGTON BUTTON

This bronze "GW" "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT" button with the Linked States Border is believed to have been made by J. B. Gaunt & Sons, Ltd., to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Washington's Inauguration as President. Illustrations of this button appeared in the Gaunt *Catalog*, and also in the Francis Bannerman Sons (N.Y.) *Catalog* in the beginning of the century.

62 · This commemorative button is somewhat similar to the Washington Inaugural button of 1789, the "GW" with the Linked States Border. As there are a number of differences, a list of comparisons is given.



10

1789

"GW" WITH LINKED STATES Border (10)

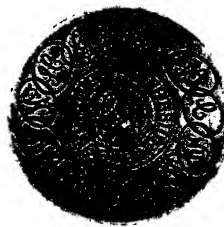
*Metal:* brass or copper

*Diameter:* 34 mm. or  $1\frac{3}{8}$ "

*Thickness:* 1 mm.

*Shank:* loop without extension, 6 mm. or about  $\frac{3}{16}$ "

*Reverse:* plain on some, on others design shows through.



62

1889

COMMEMORATIVE issue (62)

Copper or copper colored bronze

33 mm. or  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " (about  $\frac{1}{8}$ " smaller)

2 mm. ( $\frac{1}{16}$ " thick)

Loop with extension, 9 mm. or about  $\frac{5}{16}$ " high

Plain

## Washington Historical Buttons

*Lettering* of the State initials are in Spencerian script with curlicues, especially on the following:

1789

- (a) "N.H."
- (b) "N.Y."
- (c) "N.J."
- (d) "M" (for Maryland) has a die-break or gash across the beginning of the letter.
- (e) "V" has no curlicue on the beginning of the letter
- (f) "NC" has a curlicue and looks clearly like "NC"
- (g) "SC" has a curlicue

The *design* between the beginning and the end of the inscription, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," is similar to a Greek cross.

The *monogram* "GW" has a curlicue on the "W"

The *lettering*, "LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT," is in relief.

1889

- (a) Curlicues missing on "N.H."
- (b) Curlicue missing on "N"
- (c) Curlicue missing on "N"
- (d) No imperfections
- (e) Has curlicue on the beginning of the letter which makes it look like "N"
- (f) Has no curlicue and looks like "M"
- (g) Has no curlicue on "S"

Here it is shaped like an elongated diamond

No curlicue at the beginning of "W"

The lettering is impressed.

## PORCELAIN BUTTONS WITH TRANSFER PRINTS



64

66

63 · Porcelain; slightly convex; oval; 29 mm. Colored transfer print of Washington, facing right, tan background. Set in metal frame, gilt.

64 · Porcelain; slightly convex; 29-44 mm. Silhouette head of Washington, facing right, with gold border. Back: Self shank.

## Additional Washington Buttons

65 · Porcelain; slightly convex; 29-38 mm. Colored transfer print of Washington, facing slightly right, gold border. Back: Self shank.

66 · Porcelain; flat; 19-25 mm. Transfer print of Washington, facing left. Black border. Back: Self shank.

## PRESENT DAY UNIFORM BUTTONS



67



68



69

67 · STATE OF WASHINGTON. Two-piece; flat; gilt; 23 mm. Head of Washington, within a circle. The legend, "SEAL OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON 1889," encircling. All on a lined field. Back: "SUPERIOR / QUALITY."

Note: This button was made also with a cone back.

68 · STATE OF WASHINGTON, small. Two-piece; flat; gilt; 15 mm. Head of Washington on a lined field; raised rim. Back: Brass-plated iron cone back.

69 · PATRIOTIC ORDER SONS OF AMERICA. Staff type; convex; gilt; 23 mm. Head of Washington, upon the center star device. The letters, "P.O.S. OF A.," encircling. All on a lined field. Back: HORSTMANN / PHILADELPHIA."

70 · VALLEY FORGE MILITARY ACADEMY. Two-piece; slightly convex; gilt; 23 mm. Device, eagle perched on shield. Within a circle on the shield, Washington is shown kneeling. The legend, "VALLEY FORGE MILITARY ACADEMY," encircling. All on a lined field. Back: "WM. C. BOWLAND / PHILA."

Note: This button was made also with device on a plain field.

# Washington Historical Buttons

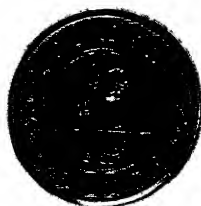
## PRESENT DAY UNIFORM BUTTONS



70



71



72

71 · NEW YORK WASHINGTON GRAYS. Two-piece; convex; gilt; 23 mm. Head of Washington facing left, on a lined field, with a beaded border. Back: "RIDABOCK & CO / NEW YORK."

72 · YONKERS POLICE. Two-piece; flat; gilt; 25 mm. Head of Washington, above a draped flag, within a raised circle. The legend, "YONKERS POLICE," encircling. All on a lined field. Back: "S. A. FRENCH / NEW YORK."

Note: This button was made also with a convex front.

## CHAPTER XII

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### *Conclusion*

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It is now more than ten years since the writer received as a gift his first Washington Inaugural button, bearing the significant legend, "MEMORABLE ERA, MARCH THE FOURTH 1789."

This button became the incentive for instituting a search for data on this subject. As other patterns of the Inaugural buttons were added, the field of interest widened, resulting finally in the monograph presented here.

In a new work of this nature there undoubtedly are omissions in spite of continued efforts to assemble all material pertaining to this subject. Such omissions, however regrettable, seem inevitable.

The writer will be pleased to hear from anyone having additional information on Washington historical buttons. If such added material is forthcoming it will be recorded and published in due course.

The writer also hopes this monograph will be the cause for enlarged interest in this field and that it will serve as a challenge to all collectors to join the search for new patterns and additional information regarding Washington historical buttons.



## A P P E N D I X

An article written by Judge Chester Pendleton and reprinted on the following pages is incorporated here for comparison and reference. It appeared in the *Quarterly Bulletin* of The National Button Society, Vol. 4, No. 2, April 1945. The designations used conform with those given in this book.



*You Are Offered a "GW"? Then Read!\**

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"THERE are no buttons more highly prized by collectors than the Washington Inaugural group; the 'gw' in Oval Center, the Eagle with Date, 'gw' with Linked States Border, and the Eagle with Star series. This is as it should be, for they are of museum quality, and represent the best that the hobby has to offer.

"Each of these buttons has survived the intervening century and a half only because some individuals or families were careful to preserve them in the first instance, and successive owners have continued to cherish them. In a measure they represent the fortunate accident of generations of successive owners, each of whom recognized the historical character of the inheritance, and has preserved the button for us. This pedigree, so to speak, is fully as important as the button itself, and should be preserved.

"From time to time new discoveries have been made of additional buttons that belong in the group, buttons with variations in size, design or subject matter, but of unquestioned authenticity. This has not been a frequent happening.

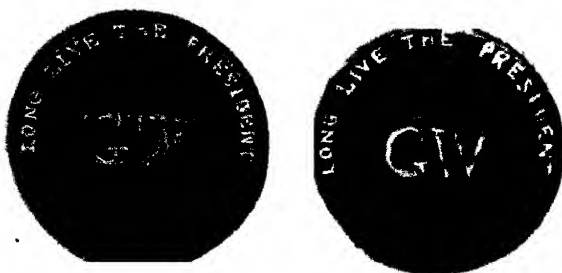
"It must now be reported to our membership that several hitherto unreported variations have made their appearance almost simultaneously. They have not been reported as variations, but have changed hands as original and authentic duplicates of recognized buttons. Without doubt they are variations, and until their authenticity can be established, prudence requires that judgment be withheld concerning them.

\* Reprinted by the Courtesy of The National Button Society, U.S.A., and the author, Judge Chester Pendleton.

## Appendix

"The buttons referred to are pictured below, with the original appearing on the left, and the recently appearing variation on the right.

"GW" in Oval



"The newcomer has a weight of approximately 5 dwt. 13 grains, a diameter of 33.4 mm. as against the orthodox 4 dwt. 11 grains and 34 mm., and the depressed oval is 16 x 8 mm. as compared with the accepted 18 x 9 mm. Its shank is broader, heavier, and lower, and the two sides of the loop shank do not join before meeting the button, but are soldered in separately a full 2 mm. apart.

"The metal used is quite coppery, and has a smooth surface, front and back, but with many parallel scratches visible under a glass, possibly suggesting a file or sandpaper action. The surface of the metal bears some possible evidence of acid action, suggesting that the button may have been made by an etching process.

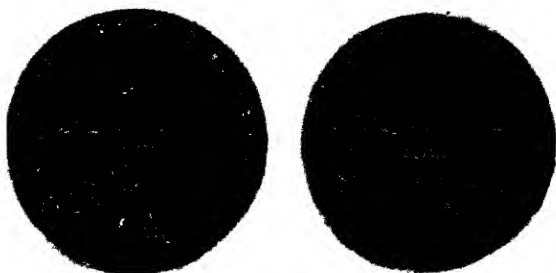
"The serifs of the 'G' and 'w' are connected, as against a separation sometimes as much as two full mm. on the accepted copy. The 'N's' in 'LONG' and 'PRESIDENT' have serifs on the top left upright, and the words in the 'LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT' inscription are more widely separated, the distance being 3½ mm. as compared with a 3 mm. separation.

"The lines in the 'gw' lettering are definitely heavier, the lower right hand part of the G being approximately 1 1/3 mm. wide as against a more tapering form in its familiar counterpart.

"The appearance of the button is new. There is none of the patina of age on its surface, and the edges of the button are equally smooth and perfect.

# Washington Historical Buttons

## THE EAGLE WITH DATE



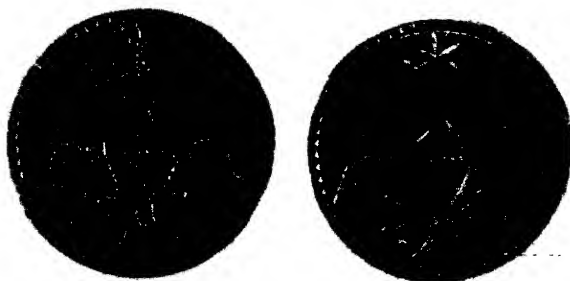
"Our newly appeared button on the right hand side weighs 3 dwt. 21.5 grains, has a diameter of 33.4 mm. as compared with the expected 4 dwt. 3 grains and 34 mm. The metal is definitely brass, again with no evidence of old age. The surface of the button is quite smooth, both front and back, again with the same parallel scratches referred to in the description of the 'GW' in Oval Center button. The back of the button shows definite evidence of the design being stamped into the metal.

"In the star there is but one short ray between the long rays instead of two, and the rays are cut with more painstaking exactness. There is no dot between the '1789' and 'MEMORABLE.' The vertical lines on the shield are not dotted, and the dots on the top of the shield are almost square instead of round. The line or beading framing the shield is at its extreme edge all the way around the shield, whereas in the accepted button the beading is a dotted frame definitely inside of the outer border, so as to have an outer margin or smooth framing.

"The lower serifs of the 'M' and 'A' in 'MARCH' are not connected, and one part of the eagle's tail is slightly longer, and extends down and into the lower left-hand serif of the 'M' in 'MARCH.' In the orthodox button the tail of the eagle is widely separated from the 'M.' The tail feathers are flush with the surface of the button, instead of being depressed, nor are there any of the cross lines on the tail feathers.

## Appendix

### EAGLE WITH STAR



"This button has a weight of 4 dwt. 16 grains, and a diameter of 34.6 mm., showing a variation of 3 grains in weight and no variation in respect to its diameter. The metal is brass, bright and new in appearance, but of a different shade than that used in the Eagle with Date. Its surface is smooth, but bears evidence of the disk having been turned in a lathe. Such concentric circles are present in many of the genuinely old metal buttons. The design on the face of the button is stamped, and shows up clearly on the reverse side, a variation which is not unusual. Part of the design shows evidence of 'dapping' or deep depression of the design, which tends to obliterate the fine detail of the design as shown in other specimens.

"On the whole this button is remarkably well done, and may be authentic. In the absence of a proper pedigree perhaps the final word may have to come, not from a button authority, but from an expert metallurgist.

## Washington Historical Buttons

### Dotted Script. "GW"



"This button weighs 6 dwt. 3.5 grains, and has a diameter of 35.1 mm. as compared with the expected 6 dwt. 11 grains and 35.4 mm. The metal is quite coppery in appearance, and similar to that used in the 'gw' in Oval Center button illustrated. The surface is smooth, and the back of the button shows no evidence that the design was stamped on its face. The metal appears to have had an acid treatment. The background for the letters and inscription is smooth, as distinguished from the stippled background in the 'gw' in Oval Center button.

"The dots between the words in the inscription 'LONG · LIVE · THE · PRESIDENT' are larger; there are but eleven dots around the large star at the bottom, instead of twelve; and there is a different serif used on the bottom of the 'g' in 'LONG,' a tapering instead of a square cut, block serif. A number of the letters, notably the 'o,' 'n,' 'l,' 'e,' 's' and 't' are shaped differently, and some are not cut sharply all the way to the background. The shank is heavier, wider and larger, and in construction is similar to that described in the 'gw' in the Oval Center button.

"The curlicue encircling the script letters in the center of the button stops abruptly when it comes to the final upward line on the 'w.' In the orthodox button this curlicue crosses this line to the left by 1.5 mm.

"In the script in the final downward stroke in the 'g' there appear eleven dots instead of ten, and in the first part of the 'w' there are fourteen or fifteen dots instead of thirteen. These dots have a tendency to run together whereas in the orthodox button they stand out boldly, distinct and separate."





